



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 17, 2024 at 6:40 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Roll Call

President Roelke called the meeting to order at 7:09pm. Members present included Council President Amy Roelke, Mayor Joe Hammer, Alderperson Trina Reid, Alderperson Michael Lawson, Alderperson Ryan Rostad and Alderperson Molly Finkler.

Alderperson Sarah Motiff was excused.

Notice of Open Meeting

Noted as posted.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Alderperson Rostad, Seconded by Alderperson Finkler to approve the agenda. Voting Yea: Council President Roelke, Mayor Hammer, Alderperson Reid, Alderperson Lawson, Alderperson Rostad, and Alderperson Finkler. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Department Reports for File included Columbus Fire Department (12/2024), Library (11/2024), Police Department (11/2024).

Public Comment

Kelly Crombie followed up with comments from the Stormwater listening session held earlier in the evening sharing his support for council moving forward with plans for future stormwater projects and funding.

New Business

2. Discussion regarding organization structure related to Utilities, Public Works, and Treasurer/Finance and updated job descriptions for Finance Director and Public Works Lead:

Amundson shared highlights from the Committee of the Whole Workshop with the Utility Commission members held on June 20, 2024. Staffing, cross-training and plans to be more efficient throughout our organization were discussed at that time. Staff and Council have been moving forward to that end by installing financial software that allows the City Financial Department to work with Utilities to create one Financial Department. Also, various organized structures have been tried in the Department of Public Works and currently we are in need of a DPW Department Head. Perhaps aligning the DPW under Utilities with a compatible structure would help the city gain efficiency overall.

Alder Finkler asked if this should be discussed at Utility Commission before bringing to Committee of the Whole. Amundson shared that this also concerns the Department of Public Works and the Treasurer's office. Other concerns from committee members included moving the two office employees from the Utilities building to City Hall, and access for residents making utility payments. Staff shared that all affected employees have been included in discussions so far and sufficient office space is available in City Hall. City Hall is also ADA accessible for our residents as demonstrated during elections.

If Committee is not prepared to move forward to the January 7, 2025 Common Council meeting, staff asked for guidance in regards to DPW leadership and posting of the lead position currently available.

Committee agreed to move both the Financial Director and Public Works Lead job descriptions to the January 7, 2025 Common Council Meeting dependent upon the Utility Commission discussion.

3. Discussion regarding possible Storm Water Utility Referendum:

Amundson gave some background on the possibility of the city going to a Stormwater Utility Referendum. The Council established the Stormwater Utility by ordinance on January 4, 2022. At that time, a rate charge ("user fee") upon each real estate parcel was not implemented. Subsequent amendments (2) to the Stormwater Utility Ordinance clarified the City's base charge (user fee) concerning timing of user fee increases and details on collection procedures. In 2023, Ordinance 782-23 was enacted which created Sec. 102-63 whereby the Columbus Utility Commission is prohibited from establishing any rates or charging any fees for stormwater services until such time as the electors approve a referendum to allow for the collection of stormwater fees under Ch. 104 of the Code of Ordinances.

There are four options for the Council to consider: 1. Continue to borrow for stormwater projects, 2. Go to a Referendum, 3. Do nothing, or 4. Repeal the Ordinance. The next plausible election date would be April 7, 2026, for a referendum.

Committee agreed to move forward a discussion of the process and a recommendation to the January 7, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting.

4. Discussion regarding 2025 - 2027 Strategic Plan:

Amundson shared the final copy of the 2025 - 2027 Strategic Plan for review. The Plan includes 15 prioritized objectives. Following the prioritization exercise the Council completed, he sent the draft to approximately 24 people involved within the City in various roles and capacities and received feedback from half of those individuals. That feedback has been incorporated into this copy. He asked members to review. Revisions are due back to staff by December 30, 2024. Committee agreed to move forward to the January 7, 2025 Common Council meeting.

Adjourn

Motion made by Alderperson Finkler, Seconded by Alderperson Rostad to adjourn at 8:46pm.
Voting Yea: Council President Roelke, Mayor Hammer, Alderperson Reid, Alderperson Lawson, Alderperson Rostad, and Alderperson Finkler. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.