

The logo features the words "CITY WATCH" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a magnifying glass icon over the letter 'I' in "CITY". Below this, the word "PREVIEW" is written in a lighter, blue, sans-serif font. The entire logo is centered within a white rectangular box, which is itself centered on a solid blue background.

CITY WATCH PREVIEW

CITY COUNCIL PREVIEW – MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2019

This week, the race for Mayor may slow down just a little due to an injury to mayoral challenger Chris Kelly. Apparently, he broke his back (or part of it) while skiing in Colorado. Campaign or not, however, the work of the council goes on with a regular meeting scheduled for February 18, 2019 at 7:00 PM. On the agenda: tight budgets for roads, annexation of a school, discussion of how suggested contributions to an affordable housing fund could get a council member in hot water... and more. Read on.

[FOR A COPY OF THE ENTIRE AGENDA, WITH ATTACHMENTS, FOLLOW THIS LINK](#)

THIS TIME, THEY'LL VOTE ON IT

At the last council meeting, a public hearing was held to hear comments about the potential annexation of approximately 17 acres of land located at Hwy. 163 and Route K into the city. That's the location of Rock Bridge Elementary School. This time, the council is expected to take formal action on the request.

Many people believe that the school is already part of the city, but that is not true. In fact, it is barely contiguous to the current city limits due to a thin strip of land that runs from the school to Rock Bridge State Park. The request is being made to bring the school within the official jurisdiction of the Columbia Police Department, thereby facilitating the ability of the department to provide a school resource officer to the school. This item was not controversial when originally considered by the P&Z Commission.

REPORTS AND REMARKS

A slew of reports will be presented at Monday's regular council meeting. They include the following topics: Improvement of the Cosmo Park tennis court; a ban on the use of "conversion therapy"; pavement management and street repair budgets; a Vision Zero program report dealing with crashes and injuries; and comments relating to a recent breach of ethics related to a proposal to build a mixed-use subdivision in north Columbia.

The city has received a letter from the Columbia Community Land Trust Board indicating that it did not authorize anyone at the city to solicit payments from developers to any land trust fund. Council member Ian Thomas has indicated that he did suggest that such payments could be made in return for favorable consideration of a zoning matter as an alternative to including some affordable housing stock in the development under consideration. Related to this issue are the anticipated remarks by a local resident who lives near the proposed development in the Public Comments section of the agenda. In an earlier Facebook post by the anticipated speaker, the Columbia Missourian has reported that the area residents were unaware of the proposed "pay to play" deal suggested by the councilman and that the city's

process in this regard is unwelcoming for concerned neighbors. This item will probably result in some discussion of the incident.

One other substantive report on the city's transit system was also presented during the council worksession that preceded the regular meeting.

DO IT YOURSELF ROAD REPAIR

One of the reports to be considered is called the 2019 Pavement Management Report. It indicates that the city does not have enough funds to keep its 1,375 miles of city-maintained roads in good shape. To address that funding shortfall, there are a few paragraphs in the report that suggest that individual homeowners or homeowners' associations could be asked to share the cost of maintenance for some local roads. The city does have the power to tax bill for some maintenance costs for sidewalks and roads, but that power has rarely been used in recent years. Most land developers are already responsible for the costs of new road construction in new subdivisions, and some have had the costs of off-site road and sidewalk construction assigned to them on a partial basis. This new approach, if pursued, could require individual homeowners to share in the costs of future road maintenance. This may be one to watch.

A RIVER RUNS UNDER IT, BUT FEWER CARS WILL RUN OVER IT

In recent days, substantial discussion has emerged regarding a proposal to rebuild the I-70 bridge over the Missouri River at Rocheport. The current plan suggests rebuilding the existing lanes of the bridge a few lanes at a time rather than constructing an entirely new bridge next to the current one and eventually decommissioning the old bridge. Rebuilding in place is significantly less expensive than building a new span from scratch.

The problem is, the bottleneck that would be caused by rebuilding in place could cause massive traffic jams, with traffic backups extending as much as 10 miles or more in either direction and potential wait times of up to 6 to 8 hours along the I-70 corridor. Such delays and backups could cost the city and businesses along the highway millions in lost revenues and could potentially harm the economic base of the entire area for years to come.

Bill R29-19 under New Business expresses support for an application for federal funding to offset the costs of the "new" bridge option and pledges local financial support for the preferred bridge alignment project.

MoDOT is asking the city, county and the surrounding communities to support expediting a full bridge replacement option that would cost approximately \$238 million, and be funded primarily through a competitive federal grant. The project score of the competitive federal grant will improve with demonstrated local financial support for the project. Accordingly, MoDOT is requesting the city support this expedited replacement option with a \$2M local contribution. The grant application is due in early March with an expected notification of award in the fall of 2019. MoDOT is willing to finance the city's \$2M contribution with a 15-year loan at 1.7% interest if needed.

Public comment will be allowed during the Monday regular council meeting.

OTHER COUNCIL NOTES

During Monday's meeting, the Columbia City Council will also consider items relating to:

- Ending a microloan program with Central Missouri Community Action
- The practice of "conversion therapy" on LGBTQ juveniles

- Additional facilities construction at Philips Park in south Columbia
- New rules for small cell wireless technology in the city
- Require tobacco retailers to obtain a city license at no cost each year

RUNNING FOR MAYOR

A new poll released by the Missouri Scout, a statewide political and governmental reporting service, indicates that Chris Kelly is currently leading incumbent mayor Brian Treece in the race for Columbia Mayor. The poll, conducted two weeks ago, shows Kelly with an overall 8-point lead, with his strongest support coming from neighborhoods in the south and central areas of the city. The poll has a margin of error of 4.5%. What could be even more telling however, is that approximately 25% of likely voters still consider themselves to be “undecided” in the race. It should also be noted that council races in the 3rd and 4th wards of the city, that are also on the April ballot, are unopposed, so voter turnout could be lighter than usual. A strong Get Out The Vote effort by either camp could affect the final vote tally in this race.

Also, challenger Chris Kelly will be slightly sidelined during the campaign. Apparently, he fractured a vertebra in his lower back while attempting to ski in Colorado. Kelly pledges to continue his campaign, but it is widely expected that his personal door-to-door activities will be curtailed.

Additional candidate forums are anticipated in the near future. The Boone County Democrats will be hosting each of the two mayoral candidates in the next few weeks – but not at the same time. Incumbent Mayor Brian Treece will be the guest speaker at the weekly Muleskinners luncheon on February 22. Challenger Chris Kelly will be the featured speaker on Friday, March 1. Weekly Muleskinners meetings are now held in the upstairs meeting room at Hy Vee on Grindstone and begin at 11:30. (They used to be held at the Columbia Country Club.)

The Boone County Democrats will also hold their annual Chili Supper on Tuesday, February 26 at the Elk’s Club beginning at 5:30 PM. Both Mayoral candidates are expected to attend that event, along with various candidates for Council 3rd and 4th Wards and school board.

Apparently, a candidate forum to be hosted by KMIZ-TV and radio station KOPN was canceled after Treece declined to participate in the event. Kelly had earlier agreed to appear at the forum.

Expect more yard signs and direct mail in the coming weeks.

CHAMBER TO HOST ECONOMIC OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

Each year, the Columbia Chamber of Commerce hosts the annual Economic Outlook Conference, providing local business leaders with an examination of the year past, and forecasts for the future.

This year, local and regional business and government leaders will discuss key workforce and infrastructure issues that affect the vitality of the Columbia community and the central Missouri region.

Missouri Department of Economic Development Director, Rob Dixon, will address statewide and regional trends in workforce development, then join Missouri Chamber of Commerce President Dan Mehan and Moberly Area Community College Dean of Workforce Development Jo A. Fey for a panel discussion. David Sylvester, MoDOT's District Engineer for its Central District, will discuss regional infrastructure concerns, then join Boone County Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill and Justin Gay,

Columbia Branch Manager for Emery Sapp & Sons, to talk about local and statewide transportation and infrastructure issues and strategies.

This year's conference will be held on February 19 from 3 to 6 PM on the Columbia College Campus in the Brouder Science Center/Bixby Lecture Hall. The event is limited to the first 135 people who register. The registration fee is \$50. Contact the Chamber for details.

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