

CITY WATCH

“The Week”

FEBRUARY 9, 2019

COUNCIL MEETING GOES MARATHON AGAIN; IMPORTANT MIXED-USE PROJECT APPROVED

This past week the Kansas City Chiefs came up a little short, so the City Council decided to go long, finally adjourning at 12:44 on Tuesday morning. During that marathon session, the council approved a significant new mixed-use project along Scott Boulevard; approved the annexation of Rock Bridge Elementary School; reaffirmed its support for the possibility of using city buses to transport public school students; adopted new rules for downtown sidewalk cafes; and considered a new weed ordinance that regulates the landscaping in your yard, not the weed in your bong.

Read on for more stories you may have missed this week.

WESTBURY VILLAGE PROJECT GETS APPROVAL FROM COUNCIL

A proposal to create a mixed commercial/residential development known as Westbury Village received a 4 – 3 vote of approval after more than 2 ½ hours of debate on Monday night. The 45-acre project is located at the northwest corner of Scott Boulevard and Smith Drive and received approval to change the zoning of the underlying ground from an old Planned designation to a mix of R-MF, M-C and M-N as defined by the new zoning code. This is the first larger-scale project that has won approval under the constraints of the new UDC. The original Planned zoning designation was approved approximately 18 years ago when Scott Boulevard was still a two-lane road. The new development is expected to feature market-rate apartments, a senior living facility and a mix of commercial and retail services including a grocery store, restaurants, a pharmacy, bank, small office and a convenience/fuel station.

The proposal asked for no design adjustments or variances and will comply with all new rules relating to buffering, landscaping, lighting, neighborhood protections, general land uses and stormwater. Additional pedways and contributions to street improvements not dictated by the code were added by the developer. All infrastructure and road improvement costs will be paid for by the developer. A preliminary plat for the area was also approved by the council during the Monday meeting.

THE OTHER ROCK BRIDGE GETS PUBLIC HEARING

Rock Bridge Elementary School (NOT THE HIGH SCHOOL) is located just outside the Columbia city limits. Now, the school wants to move to town. Citing a need to have local public safety services provided, including a school resource officer, the school district requested annexation into the City of Columbia with R-1 zoning applied. Despite the fact that the main school is only contiguous to the city by a thin strip of land that runs between the school and Rock Bridge State Park, the Council could approve the

annexation. The property abuts as many as 12 other properties that have already signed “pre”-annexation agreements. This annexation action could trigger those properties to be annexed due to the existing agreements, so additional land may be coming into the corporate city limits in the near future. The council will give final consideration to this request at its next meeting.

CITY BUS TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS RECEIVES CLARIFICATION

A resolution that clarified the city’s position on the use of city buses to transport public school children was approved by the City Council. In essence, the resolution gave support to a bill in the Missouri legislature introduced by area Representative Chuck Basye (HB 606). Mayor Brian Treece, who had come under fire for testifying against such a bill last year by mayoral opponent Chris Kelly, abstained from discussion of the proposal.

The resolution is very simple in nature. Here is the text of the proposal:

SECTION 1. The City Council hereby expresses its support for House Bill No. 606 relating to the transportation of school children pursuant to a negotiated contract between a school district and a municipality.

SECTION 2. The City Manager is hereby directed to send copies of this resolution to appropriate elected officials.

IN OR OUT – OPTION TO EAT ON THE SIDEWALK PRESERVED

City staff has worked with the Downtown CID to revise the existing sidewalk café provisions in the Code of Ordinances. The ordinance, adopted on February 4 by the City Council, makes the following changes:

- Requires an annual “sidewalk café license” which must be renewed annually and may be revoked for violations;
- Clarifies that a right of use permit shall be required for any non-portable café installation (i.e., for any permanently fastened or affixed furniture or associated improvements);
- Requires an application, site plan, and annual fee;
- Continues to require barriers if (and only if –otherwise optional) alcoholic beverages are served and provides more flexibility in choice of materials and colors;
- Prohibits advertising within the café area (other than identification of the establishment);
- Continues to provide for an unobstructed 60-inch pathway which is to be both physically and visually unobstructed (i.e., can be perceived from end-to-end) around the café area.

No provisions relating specifically to food or alcoholic beverage service were changed at this time. These rules do NOT apply to food trucks.

THE OTHER WEED ORDINANCE

Several months ago, some local citizens suggested that it would be appropriate for the city to allow the planting of various native plants and grasses in the yards of private homes rather than the more traditional turf grass and landscaping seen in most subdivisions throughout the city. Many environmental advantages to such plantings have been identified, but some people feared that such rules would lead to overgrown yards, conflicts over existing mowing and weed ordinances and a possible general decline in the appearance of some properties. City staff held hearings and recrafted an ordinance that would allow for a wider variety of plants to be used in yard-scaping, but would maintain some rules relating to the presence of weeds, vermin and the height of some types of vegetation. The council gave approval to the new set of regulations on Monday night.

SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROPOSAL GETS LONGER

On February 7, P&Z held a worksession to review new proposals regarding short-term rentals like AirBnB homes in Columbia. By the end of the worksession it became clear that the original schedule for council action would need to be amended to allow for additional debate and comment on the complicated issues involved. Here's the general timeline:

February 7 - P&Z Worksession (This is what happened on Thursday night.)

March 7 - P&Z informational meeting. (Originally this was listed as a public hearing. It will NOT be a public hearing. It will be public comment only. Then, P&Z will consider input and set a new date for the formal public hearing and eventually forward the issue to the City Council with some sort of recommendation.)

April 1 - (City Council First read will not occur as originally predicted.)

April 15 - Final vote on short-term rental rules will NOT occur on this date as originally predicted due to the action of the P&Z Commission tonight.) (No new date has yet been determined.)

If you would like to submit comments or have an interest in the issues surrounding short-term rentals, the following spreadsheet compiled by city staff could be useful to you. This is the same document used by the P&Z Commission during their preliminary discussions.

[WORKSESSION ISSUE SPREADSHEET](#)

THE COLISEUM GOT A LITTLE SMALLER

In other P&Z action this week, there was only one item on the agenda, and it was a re-run. Last year, the applicants asked for approval of a preliminary plat for a new subdivision known as "The Coliseum" in north Columbia. The 44-lot plat was turned down because it only showed one usable point of access, and that exceeded the density in the new code. This time, they came in asking for just 30 home lots and 3 common lots and made each of the lots a little bigger. The staff recommended approval - and the Commission agreed unanimously.

RACE FOR MAYOR CONTINUES

Have you started to see yard signs popping up throughout the city? That's because the City of Columbia will hold municipal elections on Tuesday, April 2. Although three council seats are up for grabs, only one race – the race for Mayor – is contested this year. The Boone County Democrats will be hosting each of the two 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.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: These events are open to the news media and the public, even if you think you might be a Republican.)

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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