

# CITY WATCH

## “The Week”

MARCH 23 - 24, 2019

### SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Spring officially began this week, but the weather only kind of cooperated. That did not stop the candidates for Mayor from heating things up in two separate debates this week. And students chose another way to insure good weather. They headed for beaches around the world as Spring Break officially began on Friday. And that, of course, makes traffic a little calmer in Columbia for at least one week. And by the way, the Columbia City Council and Planning & Zoning Commission both met in regular session this week. Here are some highlights you may have missed:

### QUICK COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

This week's City Council agenda was the shortest so far this year, with no items in the New Business section and only a handful of Reports to consider. The meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM. Most items approved last Monday appeared on the Consent Agenda and dealt with utilities, road closures and administrative matters, as well as the following proposals:

- Replacement of lighting at the Rainbow Ball Field in Cosmo Park
- Improving reporting capabilities relating to opioid overdoses and related medical problems
- Holding a public hearing for the placement of new historical markers along the African-American Heritage Trail
- Authorizing a contract with Gunbusters to destroy firearms confiscated by or surrendered to the Columbia Police Department
- Authorizing and funding the relocation of Route H to accommodate new runway construction at the airport
- Setting a public hearing to install traffic calming devices on Primrose Drive

Council also read a letter from the Public Transit Advisory Commission critical of cuts to the Columbia bus system. Specifically, the report suggested that in order to keep air service viable in this community, the city expanded service and increased funding. The group believes that the city has approached bus service in just the opposite fashion. They believe that Saturday service should be restored and the allocation of the current Transportation Sales Tax should be revisited, with more of that revenue being dedicated to the city's ground transit system. Some council members pushed back in terms of the amount of financial support that has been provided to ground transportation options over the past decade. No decisions were made regarding funding or restoration of services cut under the last budget.

## FAIR HOUSING AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

During the pre-council worksession, the council heard a report from the Fair Housing Task Force and took a first look at a Fair Housing ordinance that could be introduced at a future meeting. Both the report and the draft ordinance are worth reading.

The REPORT mentions problems historically associated with fair housing like minority population concentration, universal design, city zoning, existing neighborhood attitudes, student occupancy patterns, proximity of housing to services and transportation, new construction costs and offsets, and rental vs. ownership patterns to varying degrees.

The ORDINANCE, however, focuses almost exclusively on elements of affordability that warrant additional study. The Fair Housing Task Force will reconsider the report and ordinance with input from the council before next steps are taken. The public is free to offer written input to the task force at any time during the process. Click on the following links for details of the report and the proposed ordinance.

[LINK TO TASK FORCE PRESENTATION](#)

[LINK TO DRAFT ORDINANCE](#)

## P&Z RUNS LONG

In an unusual turn of events, the P&Z Commission meeting actually lasted longer than the council meeting held earlier in the week. They made recommendations on four cases, most with unanimous approval. However, staff announced a new city policy that led to the denial of one design adjustment – and made a surprise announcement in staff comments regarding short-term rentals.

In the design adjustment request, a property at College Avenue and Wilkes Boulevard asked to combine three existing lots into one. That was approved. But, because they were replatting, it triggered a staff review in which the city asked for an additional 18 feet of right-of-way along College. The applicant argued that College is already built out; there are no plans to widen College; if they did they would have to tear down or encroach on many of the smaller residential properties along the roadway; and MoDOT (who is responsible for College Avenue since it is actually a state road) didn't ask for the additional right-of-way. Staff, however argued that someday in the future there may be a need to widen College Avenue; that if they didn't get the right-of way no they might have to pay for it in the future; and that the new policy is that even if MoDOT doesn't want or need a strip of land, the city is going to ask for it anyway because sometimes they might have a different motive for acquiring the land than the state does. So... the commission voted to require the applicant to grant the city right-of-way along College; go back and revise the final plat to reflect that fact; and then they would approve the whole request. This new rule could have some impact on future redevelopment plans, particularly in areas of town that were first developed years ago and now are encountering pressure for different types of uses.

Other cases approved that evening included:

- Rezoning 2.8 acres of land along St. Charles Road from county zoning to city zoning designations M-N and M-C.
- Rezoning 7.66 acres at Highway 63 and Vandiver Drive from a Planned designation to M-C
- Approving a change to a Planned zoning development to allow for the construction of a Scooter's Coffee store on .5 acres of land near the roundabout at Chinaberry and Old Highway 63.

All items will be forwarded to the city council for final action.

### THE SHORT TERM JUST GOT LONGER

The biggest P&Z news of the night, however, was the fact that consideration of the whole Short-Term-Rental debate (AirBnB type lodging), was being put on hold for the next two months while the staff, the commission and the council wrestle with three other issues that have more definitive and compelling deadlines.

Originally, P&Z was supposed to consider new testimony presented at a public hearing earlier this month and try to use the next few worksessions to craft changes to the draft legislation that could then be sent to the council for final consideration. That process is now delayed until mid-to-late May. Here are the three issues the commission will consider INSTEAD of the short-term rental issue:

**Medical Marijuana** – Voters just approved the sale and use of medical marijuana in Missouri. However, Columbia’s zoning rules don’t address where or how marijuana dispensaries, testing and processing facilities and growing facilities can be located within the city. To apply for the right to open a retail marijuana sales location, you must list a specific address, and that application process kicks off on June 4. P&Z will call special worksessions on this issue so they can get proposed zoning code changes to the council on the evening of June 3 – one day before the deadline.

**Street Trees** – The newest version of the zoning code requires street trees to be planted along all roads in new subdivisions. Unfortunately, the code indicates that the trees need to be planted in the right-of-way where many underground utilities exist. The code also PROHIBITS planting trees within 4 feet of underground utilities, which could also be in the utility easement behind the right-of-way. This could put the “street” trees in the middle of your front yard instead of along the street. At least one project is now requesting permits to begin construction – and both the applicant and the city are stuck between a rock and a hard spot. The commission will try to figure out a solution to this unintended consequence of the new code to allow construction on the proposed project to begin this spring.

**CIP Projects** – The P&Z Commission is obligated by statute to review the list of city Capital Improvement Projects each year in advance of the creation of the budget for the new fiscal year. Any recommendations on such project are due before the budget message is released in June, so this activity will butt in front of short-term rental debates for now.

### BRIDGE DELAYS

MoDOT is planning lane closures on the I-70 bridge at Rocheport during the coming week. If you have business that will take you to points west of town, be prepared for delays. Here is the road closure schedule according to MoDOT:

Only one lane of I-70 will be closed in one direction each day.

- Monday, March 25 and Tuesday, March 26 – One eastbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 27 and Thursday, March 28 – One westbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Friday, March 29 – One eastbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Saturday, March 30 and Sunday, March 31 – One westbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Monday, April 1 – One eastbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 2 and Wednesday, April 3 – One westbound lane of I-70 will be closed from 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

### **THE GREAT DEBATE**

The League of Women Voters held a candidate forum for Mayoral and School Board candidates on March 20. The Columbia Chamber of Commerce held a similar debate the next night (Thursday, March 21) in conjunction with a previously scheduled event sponsored by KOPN Radio, KMIZ TV and the Columbia Daily Tribune.

If you missed either debate, you can watch or listen to the debates at the following links:

[League of Women Voters Debate](#)

[Chamber, KOPN, KMIZ, Columbia Tribune Debate](#)

The Columbia Missourian has done a nice job putting together a Voter's Guide along with a collection of past news stories that cover the various races that will appear on the April 2 ballot. Here's a link:

[Columbia Missourian Voter's Guide](#)

### **NEW CAMPAIGN FINANCE NUMBERS EXPECTED**

All candidates running for various offices in the April 2 election were required to submit updated campaign finance reports 8 days before the April 2 election. The reports covered all income and expenditures through March 21 and are due by Monday, March 25, 2019. As of noon, March 23, no NEW reports had been published by the Missouri Ethics Commission for either Chris Kelly or Brian Treece. Kelly's campaign, however, had filed an amended 40-DAY report that deletes a previously reported in-kind contribution from Columbia Marketing Group. They indicate that donation will be re-reported on the latest form as a monetary campaign contribution.

### **DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT?**

The City of Columbia has issued a new list of openings on various boards and commissions. It should be pointed out that the list includes positions on the Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and Tax Increment Finance Commission. Here is the complete list for this round of appointments:

- Board of Adjustment
- City of Columbia New Century Fund Inc. Board
- Columbia Vision Commission
- Downtown Columbia Leadership Council
- Liquor License Review Board
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Tax Increment Financing Commission
- Tobacco Retailer License Review Board

Applications for any of these positions must be received by Friday, April 5 at 5:00 PM. These positions will be filled AFTER the municipal elections have occurred on April 2.

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