

CITY WATCH

“The Week”

MARCH 9 -10, 2019

TIME TO CHANGE TIME

Daylight Savings Time starts this weekend, (technically at 2:00 AM on Sunday Morning) so when you go to bed on Saturday night – or Sunday morning – don't forget to set your clock one hour ahead. Otherwise you'll miss your favorite radio and TV programs and all those meetings you have scheduled for next week. To see what happened LAST week at city hall, keep reading.

REGULAR SEASON HOOPS OVER FOR MISSOURI MEN AND WOMEN

We don't usually report on sports, but this week was notable in terms of Mizzou college basketball. The men played their final game of the season with a disappointing loss to Ole' Miss (73 – 68 final score). A win would have secured a .500 season for the Tigers, but that was just not in the cards on Saturday.

The women, however, advanced to the semi-finals in the SEC Conference tournament for the first time, but lost to number one Mississippi State in a tough match. One bright spot, however, was the fact that senior Sophie Cunningham became the all-time leading scorer in Missouri women's basketball history. The women are expected to play in the NCAA tournament beginning later this month. The brackets for the Women's NCAA Basketball Tournament will be announced at 6 PM on Monday on ESPN.

WHAT THE CITY COUNCIL WAS UP TO THIS WEEK THIS WEEK

The Columbia City Council met in regular session on Monday, March 4, with a worksession preceding that meeting. During the worksession, the council began the task of creating a new city budget for 2020 by reviewing the status and assumptions used to craft the last budget, adopted in September 2018.

The regular meeting featured no New Business or Old Business items, however, there were several Consent Agenda items agreed to and a number of Reports presented.

Police - Four of the reports concerned issues related to the Columbia Police Department and included short descriptions of efforts now underway to improve the Citizens' Police Review Board; the creation of a group to examine records relating to police stops; and how the police intend to approach the issue of community policing. The Community Policing report was not extensive and did not replace the report from November of 2018 that was rejected by the council. It was simply a summary of how they are going about business under the new Interim Police Chief. Interim Police Chief, Geoff Jones, made his first appearance before the city council in his new role as chief. His comments revealed several specific changes being implemented by the police force, including shifts in training; changes in the of

discretionary time by officers; a renewed commitment to community policing; and oddly, the elimination of shiny gold buttons from senior police officer uniforms.

Airport - One of two Public Hearings involved the relocation of Route H – the primary access road to the Columbia airport - to the northeast. This relocation will allow the extension of the primary runway 900 feet to the north and was identified and approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in the Capital Improvement Plan. According to staff, the relocation will occur on land already owned or under the control of the city.

The construction costs for this project total \$3,266,793.00 and is being funded by FAA \$2,940,113.00 (90%), MoDOT \$163,340.00 (5%), and City TST \$163,340.00 (5%). This is one part of the overall airport improvement and expansion plan that has been in the works for the past few years.

A New Fire Station - Staff requested that the council approve a contract for the purchase of approximately 9.4 acres of land in the River Hills Estates subdivision in south Columbia. Funding in the amount of \$2,740,000 was allocated in the 2015 Capital Improvement Sales Tax Ballot for a Municipal Service Center to be located in this general area.

Public Works staff negotiated with Beacon Street Properties, LLC for the purchase of the land at a cost of \$2,250,000. This site could include a water tower, fire station, salt storage and an electrical storage yard or other municipal services. An existing house and a pole barn on the property may serve as a temporary fire station until a new facility can be constructed. That might take 1.5 to 2 years. The agreement was approved unanimously by the council.

Consent Agenda - There were several items on the Consent Agenda on March 4, with only one item removed for general discussion. These items were among the items passed unanimously:

- Approval of a request to build a new River Region Credit Union facility near the Hy-Vee on Broadway
- Finalizing the acquisition of land that would enable the new solar farm east of Columbia to hook into the Columbia utility.
- The acquisition of a certain leasehold interest in property, identified as Hangar 350, at the Columbia Regional Airport.

SHOWDOWN ON SHORT-TERM RENTALS

On March 7, Planning & Zoning held its regular meeting with just one item on the agenda – a public discussion of new regulations for and possible taxation of Short-Term Rentals (often referred to as AirBnBs). This has become a controversial subject since the city suggested taxing and regulating AirBnB-type options back in November of 2017.

Hundreds of such rental opportunities currently exist in Columbia. The discussion lasted for just over three hours and the hearing brought out people on all sides of the issue. Among the points of view offered were: 1) completely ban short-term rentals in R-1 zoning districts; 2) require conditional use permits in R-1 zoning districts; 3) adhere to current rules regarding occupancy in any dwelling; 4) pay the lodging tax; 5) pay a registration fee; 6) limit the number of rooms that can be rented in a single building; 7) provide notice to neighbors if someone wants to use their house as an AirBnB and agree to have their home listed on a map; 8) leave the rules the way they are now; 9) do some of the above; or 10) do none of the above.

No action was taken on the proposal by P&Z, however it was suggested that the Commission take all the comments offered and review them in a special worksession before continuing the debate and forwarding any recommendation to the city council. That worksession is scheduled to occur in mid-April. That means city council won't see this proposal until at least June of this year. (It should be noted that the city council DID receive an update on short-term rentals during their regular meeting this week, and it appears that there are divisions among council members on how best to move forward on this controversial issue.)

Want a sneak peek at what city staff has proposed? (This is the third iteration of proposed regulations for short-term rentals.) [CLICK HERE FOR NEW SHORT-TERM RENTAL PROPOSAL](#)

RACE FOR MAYOR PICKS UP SUPPORTERS – AND A LITTLE STEAM

Bits of election news emerged this week.

- Endorsements – Brian Treece received the endorsement of the COMO Safe Water Coalition, Our Revolution Mid-Missouri. (Our Revolution describes themselves as “a group of local Mid-Missouri progressives working to recruit, train, and support political candidates who share our progressive ideals and platform”). Chris Kelly picked up the endorsement of former Mayor Darwin Hindman.
- Chris Kelly and Brian Treece engaged in a debate sponsored by Mid-Missouri Peaceworks, the Osage Group of the Sierra Club, Renew Missouri, and the Climate Lobby of Columbia. (Because the Sierra Club had earlier endorsed Treece, they did not participate directly in the event.) During the event, Kelly linked Treece and his lobbying firm to Preferred Family Healthcare, a non-profit entity that has been the target of federal corruption investigations. Treece indicated that there has been no allegation of wrongdoing on his part, but took the opportunity to criticize Kelly for his role as a lobbyist for Ameren while serving as the chair of the city's infrastructure task force. The Columbia Missourian provided some detailed reporting on this issue on March 8. [HERE IS A LINK TO THAT COVERAGE.](#)
The Arkansas Gazette reported on this story in September of 2018. [HERE IS A LINK TO THAT STORY.](#)
- Kelly also criticized Treece for lobbying against a bill that would allow Columbia Public Schools to potentially use the public bus system to help transport high school students to and from school. Treece was lobbying on behalf of the Teamsters, who have contributed significantly to the Treece campaign this year. Treece countered by indicating that once the city took an official position on the issue, he refrained from providing testimony on the issue and has abstained on voting on the issue during subsequent city council meetings.
- The League of Women Voters has scheduled a candidate forum for Mayoral and School Board candidates on March 20. It is not clear if both Kelly and Treece will participate in this event. The Columbia Chamber of Commerce has planned a candidate forum for March 21. Both Treece and Kelly have been invited.
- DIRECT LINKS TO REPORTS FROM THE MISSOURI ETHICS COMMISSION
 - [LINK TO TREECE CAMPAIGN REPORT](#)
 - [LINK TO KELLY CAMPAIGN REPORT](#)
- Treece launched television ads in the Columbia, Missouri market starting this week. Kelly has not aired any television or radio ads at this point.
- The election is scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, 2019. Treece and Kelly are the two candidates for Mayor. Incumbent Karl Skala is running unopposed for another term as 3rd Ward Council representative. Incumbent Ian Thomas is running unopposed for another term as the 4th Ward

council member. (At least two individuals had actively considered mounting a write-in candidacy for the 4th Ward seat during this past week, but apparently will not pursue that option.)

REPEAT: A NEW CITY MANAGER - IT'S A SELECTION, NOT AN ELECTION

The City of Columbia city manager search survey is still open and accepting input from community members on values and attributes that are desired in Columbia's next city manager. Responses will be accepted until Friday, March 15. The consultant firm hired by the Columbia City Council to conduct the search, CPS HR Consulting, is administering the survey.

The survey is available online and on paper. The online survey can be found here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ColumbiaCM>

After the survey completion deadline, CPS HR will present the aggregate data from the surveys as a report to City Council to assist in the city manager search process. To see updates on the city manager hiring process, please visit CoMo.gov/City-Manager-Hiring-Process-Updates.

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