

CITY WATCH Notebook

December 30, 2019

Short-Term Rental Special Worksession January 6

On October 10, P&Z heard testimony regarding potential ordinances that would regulate short-term rentals, commonly referred to as AirBnBs. After hours of debate, the commission deadlocked in a 3 to 3 vote, meaning the issue still goes to council, but with no official recommendation or endorsement.

Now, the council has decided to pursue additional fact-finding and public input opportunities before a final decision is rendered. During the scheduled council worksession for January 6, the council will spend two hours on this topic and, after reading existing proposals and arguments, develop additional amendments to address some of the most controversial aspects of the new regulations. City staff is also expected to bring forward some companion legislation that will specify what kinds of fees, taxes or other costs may be enacted as separate legislation, depending on what regulations the council adopts.

The staff report describes these “extra” rules this way:

*The proposed regulations should be considered a single component of an overall regulatory structure that will guide the City in its management of this new land use moving forward. In addition to the attached ordinance, **concurrent legislation addressing the administration, licensure, and taxation of this new land use is proposed**. Revisions to the Rental Conversation Law, Business Licensing standards, and Lodging Tax requirements will complete the regulatory structure needed to ensure an equal and level playing field is created for all those engaged in the transient lodging industry.*

Members of the public are free to attend this work/amendment worksession, but no formal hearing will be held. Individual council members MAY call on audience members for testimony or input, but it is not a sure thing, so if you go, don't write a formal speech beforehand.

Nothing will be voted on that night, but any amendments discussed, along with a proposal sent earlier to the P&Z Commission for evaluation, will be the subject of a public hearing at the January 21 meeting.

[HERE'S A LINK TO THE CURRENT, UNAMENDED VERSION OF THE SHORT-TERM RULES THAT ARE BEING PROPOSED.](#)

Depending on how the January 21 public hearing goes, the council will continue the hearing and is expected to take final action on ALL of the new regulations and amendments at either the first or second council meeting in February.

CityWatch will bring you more details on amendments and companion rules when they are released to the public.

The 2020 Election Preview

Here's MOST of the election stuff you will need to digest during the coming year. Most people who saw this preview list said it is way more than they expected. Get ready. 2020 will be a big year for politics. Read this and you will know more than 90% of the people you talk to at your New Year's Eve parties.

City Council

Two candidates have thrown their hats into the ring for the Columbia **City Council 1st Ward** seat.

Pat Fowler, a 20-year resident of Columbia known for her involvement in historic preservation, North Central Columbia planning projects and the overhaul of the city's zoning code was first to file. She was followed by a relative newcomer to Columbia politics.

Greg Pierson - He is a St. Louis area native, currently enrolled as a freshman at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is pursuing a degree in Business through the University's Trulaske School of Business. Incumbent Clyde Ruffin is not expected to file for re-election to this post.

Incumbent **5th Ward Council Member Matt Pitzer** has filed for re-election to that post. So far, he has not drawn a challenger.

Rumor has it that at least two other individuals have requested information regarding the city council elections which will be held on April 7th, 2020.

Columbia Public School Board

Jonathan Sessions, an incumbent, has filed to seek another term on the board.

Chris Horn has filed for a seat on the Columbia School Board. He is a newcomer to politics and has not held elective public office. He works for Shelter Insurance.

Helen Wade, an incumbent, has not indicated if she will run for re-election at this time.

County Commission

Fred Parry – Incumbent Southern District Commissioner

Janet Thompson – Incumbent Northern District Commissioner

(Both have indicated that they will file for re-election. Filing opens February 25, 2020.)

Boone County Hospital Board

Jerry Kennett – Incumbent – Has filed for re-election to another five-year term.

Bob McDavid – Incumbent by virtue of appointment – Has filed to complete the remaining four years in the term of office vacated by former trustee Brian Neuner.

Other County Offices – August 4 Primary Election

The OFFICIAL filing period for all county offices does not begin until February 25, 2020. At that time, candidates may file for the following positions in Boone County Government:

Assessor, Treasurer, Public Administrator, Sheriff, Northern and Southern District County Commissioners, and at least one Circuit Judge position.

State Representatives and State Senators

All area State Representative seats (Districts 44, 45, 46, 47 and 50) will be on the ballot in 2020 (each serves a two-year term); and the District 19 State Senate seat will also be up for grabs. City Watch will provide more information on these races once filing for those seats closes on March 31, 2020.

It's too early to predict exactly who will be running until the actual filing period begins. For instance, Democrat Michela Skelton announced in August that she would be a candidate for the District 19 Senate seat currently held by Caleb Rowden. Just this week, however, she officially withdrew from the race – even though the filing period won't open until late February. Stay tuned. These races will start to really take shape in early March.

Statewide and Federal Offices

All of Missouri's statewide constitutional officers will appear on the ballot this year except the office of Auditor. So... you can expect to see contested races for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, State Treasurer and Secretary of State. There will be no U.S. Senate race in Missouri this year, but there will be a race for U.S. Representative in the 4th Congressional District of which Columbia is a part.

Presidential Primary in Missouri

If you thought the next actual election occurs in April, you would be wrong. On March 10, 2020, Missouri will hold a statewide primary for candidates who are pursuing their party's nomination for president in the Democratic, Republican, Libertarian, Green and Constitution parties. Like Missouri's typical primaries, you must declare which party's ballot you prefer, even though you are not required to register by party in this state.

To appear on this ballot, candidates must have filed by December 24, 2019. The final ballot will be certified on December 31, 2019. At this point, it's safe to say that Donald Trump will be on the Republican ballot, and several major Democratic contenders should also appear including Biden, Sanders, Warren and others. Even Michael Bloomberg. In fact, as of this writing, there are 4 Republicans, 20 Democrats, 1 Libertarian, 3 Green Party candidates and no Constitution Party candidates. One candidate, Roque "Rocky" De La Fuente, has filed as a candidate in both the Democratic and Republican Missouri presidential primaries using two different California addresses. CityWatch wonders if this will double his chances of winning or if he will accidentally split his own vote.

School Bond Issue

The April 7, 2020 ballot is expected to include a \$20 million School Bond approval question. According to Columbia Public School officials, improvements to the Jefferson Middle School necessitate the new round of public borrowing. Proceeds from the bond issue are expected to fund the following items:

- \$6 million for accessibility improvements to Jefferson Middle School, including an elevator and other improvements
- \$7.5 million for new additions to one or more schools in the district
- \$3.3 million for athletic fields
- \$1 million for general safety and security improvements
- \$2 million for other general building needs throughout the Columbia Public School system

Other future school bond issues have also been discussed, with the next rounds of bond issues commencing in 2022.

NOTE: (Typically, the school district and the city try to avoid the placement of bond or tax issues on the same ballot in an effort to avoid tax weariness among voters. If the school bond issue does gain ballot status in April 2020, it is most likely that the city will NOT place any tax or bond issue question on that

same ballot, effectively precluding any city property or gas tax increases from appearing on Columbia ballots until at least August 2020. Both ideas have been mentioned as potential new revenue sources to bolster lagging city sales tax collections. Placing a local Internet sales tax question on a ballot during this coming year is also a possibility.)

More Openings on Boards and Commissions

The Columbia City Clerk's Office is accepting applications for boards and commissions. Applications must be received by the City Clerk's Office, 701 E. Broadway, second floor, by 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 3. Applications are available at the Clerk's Office or on the City's website at CoMo.gov on the City Council page. The following are current boards and commissions openings:

- Columbia and Boone County Library District Board
- Columbia Sports Commission
- Community Land Trust Organization Board
- Downtown Columbia Leadership Council
- Finance Advisory and Audit Committee
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Parking Advisory Commission
- St. Charles Transportation Development District Board
- Tax Increment Financing Commission
- Tree Board

To view a brief description and eligibility requirements, visit CoMo.gov/Council/Vacancies or contact the Clerk's Office.

Boone County Property Tax – Your Two-Cents Worth

The Boone County Commission has completed work on its new budget, and included in that document is a two-cent increase in property tax for all Boone County residents. That makes the total real property tax rate \$0.14 per \$100 of assessed value. This increase can be invoked without appearing on a ballot under state law. The county auditor predicts that this increase will help offset expected losses in sales tax revenue. Predictions are that total sales tax collections will decrease by 1.75% in 2020.

City Offices – Residential Recycling and Trash Service Schedule During The Holidays

City of Columbia offices will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 25, in observance of Christmas Day and Wednesday, Jan. 1, in observance of New Year's Day. Offices will reopen the Thursdays following each holiday. Residential curbside recycling and trash will not be collected on the observed holidays and will be delayed by one day the remainder of each week.

CityWatch-Columbia Publications

The CityWatch-Columbia services five different publications that serve the business, government, investment, political community in Columbia Missouri. Those publications include the one you are reading now – **CityWatch Notebook** – which provides interesting statistics and news notes at various times each month.

CityWatch also publishes **Previews** of each City Council meeting throughout the year; **CityWatch Recaps** of EVERY regular City Council and Planning & Zoning meeting within 24 hours of the time those meetings

end; and **CityWatch Focus** reports related to topics of special interest such as the budget process; short-term rentals; the zoning code; political races for Mayor and City Council; etc.

All of these publications are available on a subscription basis – and we offer various levels of participation that can meet the budget and professional needs of nearly every business or organization in town.

If you are not already subscribed, or if you haven't subscribed to a plan that includes all of our various reports and updates, send us an email and we will be happy to send you additional information regarding our subscription rates and plans. We'll even send you the next copy of our CityWatch Preview and City Council Recap at no cost – just so you can see what this is all about.

Send an email to citywatchcolumbia@gmail.com and we will take it from there.

There's a lot going on in Columbia in the next few months. And a lot of it could very well affect the way you do business in this community. Let us help you stay on top of the latest developments at City Hall.

Send us a note at citywatchcolumbia@gmail.com today!

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