

The logo features the words "CITY WATCH" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a magnifying glass icon over the letter "C" 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, AUGUST 3, 2020

The Columbia City Council will meet on Monday, August 3, 2020 – one day before Missouri’s August Primary elections. Much of the business for the night will be included on the Consent Agenda and will feature no items under Old Business.

Many items grant approval to a variety of zoning and land plan change requests that have percolated through the system and have already received approval from the Planning & Zoning Commission. Several other items involve the execution of contracts that have been in the works for many months, and a few items appear to be prompted by a desire to square up the FY 2020 budget as the council prepares to consider passage of a new budget for FY 2021. The only item appearing under New Business is a proposal to issue Special Obligation Refunding Bonds in the amount of \$55,000,000. The move is expected to save approximately \$6 million over the remaining life of the bonds and could affect the need for future rate increases.

Several items have been introduced for consideration in the future that are contingent on specific timing (such as placement of a roll cart question on the November ballot or signing an agreement with the federal government for expansion of air service before an August 15 deadline) and many items listed under the Scheduled Public Comment section deal with future actions as well, including the upcoming budget process, fiscal management by the council in general, and how we deal with the new mask ordinance in general. Don’t be surprised if we don’t hear a little more about how the city will deal with the influx of students that begins this weekend.

It should not be a long meeting. Maybe council is saving its strength for the budget hearings that begin with an all day session on August 13.

[TO LINK TO THE FULL AUGUST 3 CITY COUNCIL AGENDA, WITH ATTACHMENTS, CLICK HERE](#)

WHAT MIGHT BE ON THE BALLOT NEXT YEAR

Here’s a good one. During the pre-council worksession, city council members and staff are expected to discuss possible issues to place on the ballot for next year. This is NOT a discussion about putting roll carts on the November 2020 ballot. (Although that could be discussed the way the agenda title was listed.) The roll cart issue will be decided (or not) during the August 17 regular council meeting. This pre-council meeting is supposed to be about things the city may want to put on the ballot in the year 2021, specifically, the Parks and Recreation Tax.

The Parks & Rec tax is a ¼ cent sales tax, 1/8 cent of which must be renewed every 5 or 6 years. Right now, the renewable part of the tax will expire on March 31, 2022. To insure that there is no gap in enforcement of the tax or that council would have enough time to respond in the event that it failed to be renewed, the renewal should appear on a ballot sometime in 2021, most likely on the last specified election date in 2021 - November 2, 2021.

The options, however, are more complicated than deciding whether to put the question back on the ballot or not. They could simply ask voters to renew the 1/8 cent portion of the tax for another 5 or 6 years. OR, they could ask that the renewable part of the tax have a longer renewal period – such as 10 years. OR, they could ask voters to simply make the whole tax permanent and it would not have to be renewed in future elections. The council could even ask to make the entire current ¼ cent tax permanent and then ADD an additional ¼ cent Parks & Rec Tax to the ballot question (making the total ½ cent for Parks & Rec.) The rationale for increasing the total amount is that that could allow the city to cover the entire budget of Parks & Rec with a dedicated tax, thereby freeing up \$4 - \$5 million in the General Revenue budget for other city departments and priorities.

Then you get into the politics of the whole question. Although the Parks & Rec tax has been a fairly popular tax in this town, it might appear on a ballot with some other issue or election, and it might appear on the ballot when the economy is still in disarray. Some of those other “political things” may be discussed on Monday evening as well.

We already know that two council seats will be up for grabs in the 2nd Ward and 6th Ward in April of 2021. Incumbent 2nd Ward council member Mike Trapp has already said he doesn't plan to run again, so that could be an open seat. Incumbent 6th Ward member Betsy Peters has not indicated what she will do, but rumors are she would draw a challenger this time around. She escaped that threat last time around.

It is also possible that the city might want to try to pass a use tax authorization for online Internet sales (which would be helpful if the Missouri legislature could get its ducks in a row) and/or any tax or fee increases that may be necessary due to the various pressures on the current and future city budgets. If that were to be the case, what ballot would that go on and would it compete or conflict with the Parks & Rec sales tax renewal?

We also know that in the FY 2021 the City Manager has asked for no new utility rate increases (with the possible exception of a 3% water increase already approved by voters), but each of the utilities have indicated that they will need some sort of increase by 2022 at the latest. We also know that in this budget the city has cut nearly 160 FTE jobs from the roster but still wants to expand the workforce in health and public safety and has a desire to continue to increase city worker pay, particularly in the areas of solid waste, electric line workers and some public safety. Right now, new money for any of those projects would be hard to find without some sort of new sales or property tax – or the tax on Internet sales if everything went as it would need to with the Missouri legislature and the local public vote.

Bonding for public projects is always a possibility, so there could be some discussion of something like that during 2021, and the wild card is the possibility of a fees on development that has been proposed occasionally by both Skala and Thomas in various forms. This time, we know that Thomas has been quite vocal about his view that development does not pay its own way – particularly when we expand single

family housing into new subdivisions – and yet another cost of service study was approved in last year’s budget. It is possible that all of these things could be mentioned on Monday – but very few of them will probably be decided with any certainty before the regular council meeting begins at 7:00 PM Monday night.

We will continue to watch this important topic as more specifics become available.

CHARLOTTE’S WEB – EXPANDING AIR SERVICE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

The U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded Columbia Regional Airport (COU) a Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant in the amount of \$800,000 related to acquiring new air service at COU. The scope of the grant project includes a minimum revenue guarantee (MRG) and associated marketing program to recruit, initiate and support new daily air service to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport (CLT). The total project cost will be \$1,110,000.

\$800,000 will come from the SCASDP grant. \$150,000 will come from a MO Dot Air Grant. \$80,000 will come from funds previously committed by the University of Missouri. The City will kick in \$80,000 from publishing and advertising funds allocated to the airport in the FY 2020 budget.

OTHER INTERESTING ITEMS

Here are a few items or areas of interest on the August 3 Council agenda:

- A bill will be formally introduced to run the GoCoMo bus system “fare-free” during FY 2021. That will include waiver of Paratransit fees. The city will continue to pursue a contract with MU to provide on-campus shuttle service at a cost of approximately \$1.2 million per year.
- Expected to approve a contract for \$3 million in design services for Phase 1 of a \$23 million Water Treatment Plant Upgrade approved by voters in 2018. The upgrade will return the plant to its full rated capacity of 32 MGD.
- Will introduce an ordinance to set the city property tax rate for the coming year at \$0.4078 per \$100 assessed valuation.
- Separate bills are being introduced that will ask Boone County Government for a share of CARES Act funding that is distributed through the county. One bill asks for \$1.8 million for contact tracing and other health department related services. Another bill asks for authority to distribute \$750,000 to COVID-19 impacted businesses.
- Establish an agreement with Columbia College that would allow all City of Columbia employees to receive a 10% discount on all courses and no charge for books or other fees including application fees, technology fees or graduation fees.
- Authorize improvements to the existing Walnut Street Bridge in order to extend the Hinkson Creek Trail from Stephens Lake Park to Clark Lane.

SPECIAL MEETING: HOW CITY WILL SPEND \$575,000 ON SMALL BUSINESS

The City of Columbia will hold an informational meeting for small business and microenterprise loans on August 6. The City of Columbia will be investing \$575,000 in local small businesses and is prioritizing outreach to local minority and women owned businesses. These are funds made available through special COVID-19 programs. The City is awaiting the release of funds at the federal level and anticipates opening the application process in mid-August.

Please join us the evening of August 6th from 7:30-8:30pm to learn how to navigate the application process and how to find additional assistance. The meeting will be hosted Via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86436300145>. Please see the attached flyer for information about the meeting and what materials are required to apply. [LINK TO LOAN PROGRAM FLYER](#)

P&Z PREVIEW

The Planning & Zoning Commission will meet again in regular session on August 6. Although the last P&Z meeting in July was cancelled due to a lack of formal business on the agenda, this upcoming meeting should be full. Here are the items expected to be heard that evening:

- Boone Electric Plat and Design on Rangeline
- 1705 Ballenger Victory Christian Church – new lots
- Rezoning on East Texas Avenue near the old Enterprise Rental
- Annexation on Bradbury
- One Fyfer Place Replat
- Rezoning to Planned on Green Meadows. (This is the item tabled at the July 9 meeting.)

And if you are really a glutton for punishment, the Board of Adjustment will hold its monthly meeting at 7:00 on Tuesday, August 11. No agenda is posted for this meeting yet, but it will be streamed online and carried on the various assigned cable stations.

IT'S PRIMARY ELECTION DAY ON TUESDAY

On Tuesday, August 4th, 2020, Missouri voters will be able to participate in the statewide Primary Election. In Boone County, one statewide Constitutional Amendment question will appear on the ballot and 60 individual candidate names will appear on the ballots of the five political parties that have achieved ballot status. Ballot-qualified parties include: Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, Green and Constitution parties. Voters will be required to choose the ballot of one party during the primary election even though Missouri voters are NOT registered to vote by party. No crossover voting is allowed, so once you choose a party, you will not be able to vote for candidates of any other party in the primary. Those names won't even appear on the form of the ballot you receive.

This time, there will only be one question on the ballot no matter where you vote in Boone County. It will be known officially as Constitutional Amendment No. 2, but most people will be referring to it as the Medicaid Expansion amendment, because that's what it does. (CityWatch published an extended report on this issue earlier this month.)

CityWatch also published a summary of all candidates who will appear on the various forms of the ballot in Boone County in late June. If you would like to refresh your memory before you head to the polls, download a copy of our overview at the following link. **DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON TUESDAY!**

[LINK TO AUGUST 2020 PRIMARY ELECTION OVERVIEW REPORT – BOONE COUNTY](#)

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