



## **CITY COUNCIL PREVIEW – MONDAY, JULY 6, 2020**

The Columbia City Council will meet on Monday, July 6, 2020 for its regular meeting, officially kicking off the second half of the year 2020. And if the second half of the year is anything like the first, hang on to your hats. This council meeting will touch on many of the most salient issues we have been dealing with lately, including the coronavirus, community policing, the city budget and all the regular business of the city including infrastructure, zoning and general services.

Five of the six Scheduled Public Comments will deal with policing, institutional racism and the concept of “defunding” police budgets and the council plans to adopt a resolution that states the city’s commitment to equity, fairness and inclusion in its approach to the COVID-19 issue. The council is also expected to allocate about \$500,000 in one-time-only COVID-19 funds received from Federal sources; approve funds for the purchase of land for a new fire station in south Columbia; and clean up a few loose ends relating to short-term rental legislation that has now been delayed. And, oh yes, the council will be discussing COVID-19 and the relative merits of wearing masks.

Read on for more details.

**[TO LINK TO THE FULL JULY 6 CITY COUNCIL AGENDA, WITH ATTACHMENTS, CLICK HERE](#)**

### **WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN? SOON, IT MIGHT BE EVERYONE**

One of the most talked about issues that will appear on the July 6 council agenda is a proposal to require the wearing of face masks in both public and private settings to combat the increasing impacts of COVID-19 in the Columbia area. If approved, the new rule will be in effect for the next 90 days; will establish a \$15 fine for individuals and \$100 fine for businesses who fail to follow the new requirement; and exceptions to the general rule for people with competing health problems.

Petitions on both sides of the issue have been circulated through the community. Some supporters of the new rules believe that widespread wearing of masks will help curtail the spread of COVID-19 without completely closing down general business operations in the city. Opponents of the new regulations have pointed to the lack of clear evidence that indicates mask-wearing will be an effective deterrent to the spread of the disease and that the costs of implementation will once again be passed on to the business community.

Because the rule is being proposed as an emergency measure that would take place immediately upon approval, the proposal must receive 6 out of 7 votes from the council to be enacted. The rule will apply to the City of Columbia ONLY – not the county overall.

Both Columbia Public Schools and the University of Missouri will be requiring or encouraging various levels of mask-wearing when school resumes in August. If this bill passes, school policies may have to be amended to meet the requirements of this new set of rules. It should also be noted that during the same meeting that new mask wearing regulations will be voted on, the city plans to approve a cash sponsorship of the Show Me State Games which will invite as many as 20,000 participants to the city between July 17 and August 9. Some of those events will be exempt from the new rules, although others may require the wearing of masks in certain situations.

In a semi-related move, the council is expected to adopt new ordinance language that would allow any new orders issued by the Director of Health to expire after 21 days unless approved by the city council. This basically matches the rules currently in place for orders issued by the city manager under emergency conditions.

[HERE'S A LINK TO THE ACTUAL TEXT OF THE NEW PROPOSAL](#)

#### **FIRE STATION: OPTION 2**

For nearly two years, the City of Columbia has been exploring the possibility of constructing a new fire station in the southern part of the city in order to serve the expanding southern boundary of Columbia. In fact, funds were appropriated for the potential purchase of property in the FY 2019 city budget. Initially, a 10-acre parcel was identified that could have been used for multiple city uses including salt storage, a fire station location and a new water tower. Unfortunately, multiple owners of the property in question could not agree on terms for the sale of the land to the city and the acquisition of that parcel was abandoned by the city.

In its place, the city has identified a 2.5 acre lot in the Deerfield Ridge area located at Scott Boulevard and State Route K. The purchase price is \$340,000; the funds have been previously budgeted but not spent; and the land is currently available. This item appears on the Consent Agenda.

#### **SHORT-TERM RENTAL – NO RULE/NO ENFORCEMENT**

The short-term rental debate was pushed from the forefront when the coronavirus arrived on Columbia's doorstep. Most of the pending legislation was cancelled for the time being or delayed for consideration until at least December of this year. One related item was never fully dealt with, and the council is expected to do that on Monday evening.

As most people are aware, short-term rentals (often referred to as AirBnBs) have been operating in the City of Columbia for more than 10 years in various iterations. During the debate over how these types of rentals should be regulated, however, city legal staff took the position that short-term rental/home sharing businesses are not authorized uses under the city's current zoning code, and that by virtue of that lack of overt permission, they are technically not allowed. However, the city has never taken action against the existence of any such businesses in the city and instead pursued the adoption of new rules that would regulate such uses in the future.

The city is still not interested in closing down existing short-term rentals at this time, so they have proposed a bill that will allow the city manager to NOT enforce any zoning use rules against any such

establishments for the time being – but will allow the city to enforce any other related rules (such as nuisances, safety and building code violations, etc.). The rule extends the grace period for non-enforcement until January 31, 2021, by which time the council may have revisited the whole issue of short-term rentals and clarified any operational rules related to the rentals at that time.

#### **NEW BUDGET ON THE WAY**

Late last month, City Manager John Glascock revealed that the city is considering significant workforce reductions when it begins official hearings on the FY 2021 city budget. Early indications are that more than 75 city positions could be eliminated saving the city nearly \$4 million in payroll costs on an annual basis. Early reports indicated that the cutbacks are expected to include the elimination of some jobs that are currently unfilled and some that will require the layoff of current employees. The council will also end its contract with Columbia Public Schools to provide school resource officers through the police department.

These savings, however, are just the tip of the iceberg. According to the current budget timeline, City Manager Glascock will present a full draft budget to the city council on July 24 for initial review and consideration. That will be followed on August 13 by a day-long budget worksession where priorities and plans for the upcoming budget may start to take shape.

The council is obligated to review, recommend and approve a final budget for the city during the month of September so the city can begin its new fiscal year on October 1, 2020 with a new, balanced budget in place.

#### **FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION IN THE SKY – BUT NOT ON THE GROUND**

The coronavirus has changed just about every aspect of our lives on some level it seems – and holiday observances are no exception. This year, the city WILL sponsor a fireworks display on the evening of July 4<sup>th</sup>, but it will be held at Cosmo-Bethel Park (NOT Downtown Columbia and NOT Cosmo Park in North Columbia), and there will be NO special activities occurring on the ground. No parades; no parties in the park; no bands; not even special parking.

The event has been moved from the downtown location to a larger property to facilitate a safe fall-out zone so that the department can sponsor a fireworks show that reaches a height that is visible to as many residential homes in Columbia as possible. This will encourage citizens to safely watch the show from their homes. The department evaluated multiple park and private sites based on the following criteria: space for the fireworks discharge and fall zones; elevation in Columbia; not near construction sites; and far enough from federal or Missouri highways as to not cause a problem. The park will be closed to provide a safe fall out zone and the elevation of the park should provide visibility of the fireworks for at least a four mile radius which includes 40,606 households. All parking areas in Cosmo-Bethel, Gentry and Rock Bridge High School will be closed to the public.

The fireworks are scheduled to begin at 9:15 pm and will be choreographed to music that will be played on BXR 102.3 radio. The Community Relations team is investigating ways to livestream the fireworks display for residents, potentially through resources offered by the City's social media accounts and through City Channel services.

The show will cost about \$30,000 and is being funded primarily by private contributions as well as the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### **OTHER INTERESTING ITEMS**

Although much of the council's business is scheduled under the Consent section of the agenda, a few particular items are of note:

- Three items will enable the eventual extension of Discovery Parkway to New Haven and Rolling Hills Road as well as other water and road improvements in the Lenoir Street area.
- Approving a deal to allow the Bluebird Network to install 144,000 feet of fiber optic cable in the city right of way for a small annual fee.
- Appropriating an additional \$1.35 million from restricted hotel tax funds to the Columbia Airport Terminal project
- The council is expected to spend \$573,473 in special COVID-19 CDBG federal funds in the following manner: \$270,000 for a Rent and Mortgage Assistance program; \$175,000 for a micro-enterprise business loan program (very small businesses); \$70,000 on programs to address homeless problems related to the coronavirus; and \$58,473 in administrative costs.

### **P&Z PREVIEW**

Planning & Zoning will meet for its regular meeting on July 9, 2020. There will be just two items on the regular meeting agenda:

- "McKee Place Plat No. 1." The subject site is located at the northwest corner of McKee Street and Clark Lane, contains approximately one-acre, and is zoned R-MF (Multi-family Dwelling)
- Approval of a rezoning and development plan to be known as, "The Godfrey PD Plan." The applicant is proposing 4, 4-unit apartment buildings (16 units) with vehicular access onto Green Meadows Road. Their 1.45-acre property is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Green Meadows Drive and Green Meadows Circle.

It should be noted that the public will be allowed to attend and comment at this meeting.

## **HAVE A HAPPY AND SAFE INDEPENDENCE DAY WEEKEND.**

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