

1 **Town of Columbus**



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3 **Minutes of Columbus Town Council**
4 **July 20, 2023**
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6 Mayor McCool called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:00 PM.
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8 In attendance were Mayor, Patrick McCool, Councilmen Richard Hall, Brent Jackson, and
9 Councilwoman Becky Kennedy, Town Manager Timothy Barth, Town Attorney Lora Baker,
10 Police Chief Scott Hamby, Public Works Director James Smith, and Town Clerk Daisy Trejo.
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12 In absents: Councilman Mark Phillips
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14 **Regular Meeting 5:00 PM.**
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16 **Item #1. Invocation**

17 Mayor McCool gave the invocation.
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19 **Item#2. Pledge of Allegiance**
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21 **Item #3. Public Comment**

22 Ms. McKinnon from Beechwood Drive stated that five years ago, the Town of Columbus sent
23 certified letter to the property owner of 75 Beechwood West, but more needs to be done about it.
24 Ms. McKinnon said she wants the house to be marked as abandoned. Ms. McKinnon added the
25 owner of the house has had the opportunity to sell or do something with the property. Ms.
26 McKinnon stated it is a fire hazard.

27 Lindsey Moore from 220 W Beechwood Drive stated he is concerned about drug activity and
28 various damaged trees and there is a decreased on the value of the properties around the
29 abandoned house.
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31 **Item #4. Agenda Adoption**

32 Councilman Jackson requested to add line item 14H for personnel matters G.S.143-318.11-
33 closed session.
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35 Ms. Trejo requested to add line item 13B for Municipal Code Changes.
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37 Councilwoman Kennedy made a motion to approve the agenda with the changes made.
38 Councilman Hall seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.
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40 **Item #5. Approval of Consent Agenda**

41 Councilwoman Kennedy made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.
42 Councilman Jackson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Item # 6. Presentation from Catina Gray About the "Feed the Foothills" Music Festival

Ms. Gray stated the Feed the Foothills event is on August 23 to benefit the community food drive. Ms. Gray added Steps to Hope, and Thermal Belt Outreach will be organizations that are being supported from this event. Ms. Gray stated the committee is asking for a \$1,000 donation. Mayor McCool asked if the bands were well known. Ms. Gray stated Diamonds and Whiskey a from Charlotte will be presented and are very well known.

Councilwoman Kennedy made a motion to donate \$1,000 to Feed the Foothills Music Festival. Councilman Jackson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Item #7. Presentation by Cliff Marr Regarding Municipal Election in Polk County

Mr. Marr from the Board of Elections presented the 2023-2024 session. Mr. Marr stated there had been major changes to municipal elections, such as moving to even-numbered years. Mr. Marr said board members will need to file for office next July 2024; there is no change for the mayor's office but specifies that the mayor will stand for election in 2024 and every two years after that. Mr. Marr added that there is some confusion on the wording for councilmembers under part 2.3: where states "the term of the mayor and two council members" should read as "the term of the mayor and three councilmembers." Mr. Marr stated the voters would see two very different things in the voter's ballot: instead of having just one ballot for just city council, now voters will have city council, state, county, and federal voting. Secondly, two different ballots, one for the county and one for the city. Mayor McCool asked whether the board would pay part of the election as they have in the past. Mr. Marr stated the cost will not be the same as previous years, he believes the cost will be zero but will certainly let the Town Manager know if anything changes.

Item #8. Discussion regarding the house 75 Beechwood West

Lora Baker stated the town has gone through the ordinance's policies, there was a judicial hearing, and the property owner did the requirements that the court ruled. Mr. Barth stated the property owner did take care of the things at the time. Mr. Barth added it is an abandoned structure but will ask the county building inspector to determine if it is, in fact, an abandoned structure. Mr. Barth stated the issue might be to get inside the house. Chief Hamby stated he could get an administrative warrant inside the house. Attorney Baker stated she would investigate the administrative warrant. Mr. Barth stated there is a formula they will need to follow since the state changed its laws regarding the difference between dilapidated and deteriorating.

Attorney Baker stated there needs to be a reassessment of the house to see what has changed and what needs to be done. Mayor McCool stated the board understands that it is a problem, but the board wants to make sure the town does not do anything illegal to where the town will have to build another house for the property owner. Mayor McCool added the town will assess the issue with the administrative warrant and will keep the case in town council meetings.

Councilman Jackson asked when will the culvert be fixed. Mr. Smith stated it must be done early morning; once Prince Paving comes in, he will take them and asked how long the process will take since the road must be closed.

Item #9. Public Hearing on Consideration of Rezoning Certain Property from R-2 to HC

Mayor McCool opened the public hearing for consideration of rezoning certain property from R-2 to HC.

Mr. Barth stated two properties are zoned R-2 located on Ogle Street. The neighboring properties that are in between are zoned Highway Commercial.

Ms. Lunsford from Ogle Street stated it is very concerning to have the property zoned as highway commercial because she has grandkids that will be neighboring an unknown commercial business.

Juanita Odel, the property owner, stated in 2019 she took ownership of the property. Ms. Odel stated she had received letters from Town Manager, Mr. Barth, regarding the property's conditions. Ms. Odel stated that neighboring properties are highway commercial because back in the day, the post office was thinking of buying the property to use it as a potential set office, but instead post office bought the primary location on Ward Street. Mayor McCool asked if it would work best to have the neighboring properties as residential. Ms. Odel stated the highway is right below, and the town needs to build the city up and help clean the property. Mayor McCool added the property owner is responsible for cleaning up the property. Councilman Jackson stated if the current tenants living at the property are not following the rules, the property owner could evict them. Mayor McCool asked if the planning board had had a chance to listen to the request. Mr. Barth stated the planning board had said the same thing as the council.

Mayor McCool closed public hearing.

Item #10. Consideration of Rezoning Certain Property from R2 to HC

Councilman Jackson made a motion to deny the request on Consideration of Rezoning Certain Property from R-2 to Highway Commercial. Councilwoman Kennedy seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Item #11. Consideration Approving a contract to construct a Temporary Road at the WWTP

Mr. Barth stated the town needs to determine what they can do with the sheet wall at the wastewater treatment plant, either push it back or build a new fence. Mr. Barth added the only way to know is by digging deep into the soil and getting the samples. Mr. Barth stated Councilman Jackson had found a company that would do the job for a reasonable price.

Councilwoman Kennedy made a motion to approve the contract to construct a temporary road at the wastewater treatment plant. Councilman Hall seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Item #12. Consideration of a Pay Increase for ABC Board Members

Councilman Jackson asked how many meetings the ABC Board Members have a month. Mayor McCool stated two meetings per month. Councilwoman Kennedy stated the ABC board only requires one meeting per month. Councilwoman Kennedy added she was at some point head of the board and believes it needs to be set as one set payment per month, not per meeting. Councilman Hall stated he likes monthly pay instead of per-meeting pay. Mayor McCool stated he would like the increase to be \$250 per month since the ABC Board committee are a good group of people that work hard. Councilman Hall asked how many members were on the board. Mayor McCool stated three board members. Councilman Hall added that he would like to see the increase to \$200 monthly. Councilwoman Kennedy motioned to increase the pay to \$200 monthly regardless of how many meetings the ABC Board meets a month. Councilman Jackson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Item #13. Consideration of Policies Regarding ARPA Funding

Mayor McCool asked if the names could be removed and mention positions such as Mayor and Town Manager. Mayor McCool asked if the money from ARPA had already been used. Mr. Barth stated that not all the money had been used but would be used for this fiscal year.

Councilman Jackson made a motion to approve the consideration of Policies Regarding ARPA Funding with the changes of leaving out the names of individuals and using titles only.
Councilwoman Kennedy seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

13b: Municipal Code Changes

Ms. Trejo stated Town Attorney Baker provided these ordinances. Attorney Baker added the ordinances must come in front of the Town Council, and at next month's meeting, the Town Council will be able to vote on the suggested changes.

Item #1. Reports

a. Council Report:

Councilman Hall asked if the town could add streetlights around Veterans Park because it is dark around that area.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about the Coke machine located on Mills Street. Attorney Baker stated the measurements had been taken but will have a definite answer in the next month's meeting.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about the steps from Calvert's up to Blue Waters. Mr. Barth stated he would talk to Blue Waters next week and ask for an update.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked for an update on the potholes on Wall Street, Case Street, Simms, Walker Street, ext. Mr. Smith stated Prince Paving would be in town the next few weeks to do the job.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about limbs located on Wall Street; can public works trim them down, or is it the property owner's responsibility? Mr. Smith stated public works can trim them down.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked if the sewer lift station behind Bricks has been resolved. Mr. Smith stated he has called Duke Energy and will ask what exactly is needed before an electrician can come out. Mayor McCool stated he would like the sewer lift station resolved as soon as possible.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked when the sidewalk on N Peak will be completed. Mr. Smith stated it would be completed once Prince Paving comes in.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked for an update regarding the pool table. Attorney Baker added the town is working on changing the municipal code.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked if the state approved the project regarding sewer systems. Mr. Barth added that it had been approved.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked for an update regarding the sidewalk on Peniel Road. Mr. Smith added Duke Power had moved the power pole and would complete the sidewalk.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about changing out the overhead lights in downtown Columbus. Mr. Smith added that Duke Power will see if they can place all LED lights.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about painting the fire hydrants. Mr. Smith stated the paint had been ordered and should be here any day.

Councilwoman Kennedy asked about the shirts that were supposed to be ordered for Town Council. Ms. Trejo stated the shirts will be ordered this new fiscal year. Councilwoman Kennedy asked about the signed at Samco Properties. Mr. Barth stated that at the next Town Council meeting, the planning board committee is proposing to add verbatim under the UDO-sign section as "any commercial property with a master sign offering all or part of the property for sale, lease or rent may only appear on the master sign. No individual signs will be allowed."

Councilwoman Kennedy asked if the town council could have a list of the town employees, with each person describing their job duties. Councilwoman Kennedy added to have each employee write down what they do daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Councilwoman Kennedy stated Chief Hamby knows what his officers are doing but to provide a general list, such as how often they do security checks, ride through neighborhoods, etc. Councilwoman Kennedy added that she would like the report submitted in two months.

Mayor McCool said he would like to see the final numbers for the 4th of July event.

b. Planning Board Report:

Noted

c. Manager's Report:

Mr. Barth stated August 17 is the next Town Council meeting.

D. Public Works Report:

Mr. Smith gave an update on the leak on Skyuka Road; around ten customers stayed without water. Mr. Smith added that there will be a shut-off valve after the job is finished.

Councilman Jackson stated the town must file a complaint with the insurance company regarding the gas leakage behind Board of Elections.

e. Police Report, ABC Board Report, Fire Department Report

Chief Hamby stated the Flock cameras second day installed were available to detect a suspect.

Chief Hamby added that Brandon Bumgarner will return on July 26 as a full-time officer.

Councilwoman Kennedy stated she appreciates everything that the Columbus Police Department does.

Mayor McCool asked if the contract had been found regarding the fire department. Mr. Barth stated he has yet to be available to locate the contract.

f. Discover Columbus Report

Mrs. Kan stated Christmas lights would be ordered soon and would start repairing Christmas lights. Mrs. Kan added by putting a tent up for people to sit under for the farmers market and having water for them, the people wanted to thank the town for thinking of them.

g. July 4th Committee Report

Councilman Jackson added a bigger tent, a sign that said Town of Columbus, and maybe set a misted fan for people to cool down. Ms. Trejo wanted to thank the town council members and mayor for coming out and helping at the information booth.

Item 14H: Personnel Matters G.S.143-318.11-closed session.

230 Councilman Jackson made a motion to open the closed session meeting to order at 6:51 pm.
231 Councilwoman Kennedy seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

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233 Councilman Jackson made a motion to close the closed session meeting to order at 7:37 pm.
234 Councilwoman Kennedy seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

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237 There being no further business, Councilman Jackson made a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman
238 Kennedy seconded the motion, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:42 PM.

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242 Patrick McCool, Mayor

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246 Daisy Trejo, Town Clerk