



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Monday, February 16, 2026
5:00 PM

Pre-Council

City Hall
Conference Room
1A/1B
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, MO

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present: 7 - Buffaloe, Foster, Waterman, Peters, Carroll, Sample, and Elwood

Public Safety Funding Discussion

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

Matthew Lue, Finance Director, presented on the general fund.

Lue started off by going over the current expenditures of the general fund as well as the breakdown of FTE. Lue mentioned that Public Safety made up more than half of the general fund.

Council member Nick Foster asked when parking moved to Police from Public Works, and asked for clarity about funding. Jim McDonald, Assistant Finance Director, stated that those funds came from general revenues, mentioning it moved from one category to the other.

Mayor Buffaloe asked if the "Other Expenditures" item on the graph also included contractual services. McDonald confirmed that it did. Adding that travel and training would also be included in this item.

Council member Betsy Peters asked what the budget is for Sustainability. Lue stated that it was approximately \$635,000.

While discussing the Health and Environment FTE, Lue explained the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing, noting that staff increased during the pandemic.

Peters asked about how the budget will be affected when the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding goes away. Lue explained that ARPA was not captured in this chart.

Buffaloe asked about intergovernmental revenue and Lue explained the process. He offered the example of the IT department serving all departments in the City and being funded through fees from the other departments.

Foster asked if we are seeing these increases because of pay increases or is it attributed to something else. City Manager Seewood explained the commitment to employees, as well as increases the health insurance costs.

Lue discussed the midyear adjustments for Public Safety and moving officers from Police to the Regional Airport Fund for Airport security..

Lue mentioned that Sales and Use tax make up less than 30% of revenue.

Peters confirmed that the graph showed the percent change of sales and use tax, and not the amount of sales and use tax the city was bringing in. Lue confirmed. McDonald and Lue explained that they do not expect much growth in FY 26.

City Manager De'Carlon Seewood discussed what brought this conversation to light. As there have been more demand for resources, there are not enough funds to support those needs. He highlighted the need for revenue to meet the growing needs. Seewood mentioned property tax was also considered, but it would not raise the revenue needed.

Lue explained that with property tax, the city brings in about a 3rd of the current public safety budget. He further explained that the city would outpace those revenues, highlighting pensions. He mentioned that they have a lot of demand on a small pool of money right now.

Council member Valerie Carroll asked if there is an ability for the city to use a combination of property and sales tax to help fund public safety. Seewood said that would require two separate ballot initiatives. Lue said it might be difficult to have two tax initiatives as they may not both pass which would still cause future funding issues.

Council member Vera Elwood asked if anyone has ever successfully gotten a combination of a property sales tax and sales tax increase on the ballot. Lue mentioned that not to his knowledge but he would need to do some research on it.

Sheela Amin, City Clerk, noted that there had previously been a ballot on a property tax increase to support public safety in November 2015, but the initiative failed.

Elwood mentioned that concerns have been raised that additional sales tax needs to have legislative approval at the state level. Nancy Thompson, City Counselor, stated that the City has remaining authority in what is permitted by the State, so this would not require State authorization.

Lue explained that what is proposed would be a dedicated tax to fund public safety. Lue broke down how raising taxes would affect Columbia tax payers.

Waterman asked about the ongoing allocation of the general fund for public safety and continuing that funding.

Lue stated that the most critical need in stabilizing the budget for the City is working on the Police and Fire Retirement Funds. Some of the additional priorities are adding 50 police officers and 40 firefighters over the next four years. This would include new police facilities and two new fire stations, as well as vehicles.

Waterman asked about implementation for stabilizing the pension funds. Seewood and Lue agreed that it is unlikely to get it completely stabilized in four years.

Peters asked about seeing plans for five to ten years on what would be prioritized from this sales tax if passed.

Police Chief Jill Schlude and Fire Chief Brian Schaeffer have worked together to identify

their needs. Schlude mentioned that every police officer they hire costs around \$135,000 with salary, benefits, training. She noted that does not include a vehicle. Chief Schaeffer stated that Seewood came to them several months ago to identify their department's needs.

Council member Jacque Sample asked if the pension was budgeted per officer or per position, and Lue explained it is budgeted per officer.

Buffaloe asked for more information on the fund. Lue explained that once the money is allocated to the fund, it stays there. It would go into reserves for that fund and would be separate from the general fund.

Buffaloe asked the next steps to getting this initiative on the August 2026 Ballot. Seewood explained that the city would have to prepare the ballot language. Seewood has met with both police and fire unions already to get their input. The unions would like the funds to only go towards public safety for the Police and Fire Departments.

Waterman asked when the language would come to the council for a vote. Buffaloe explained that it would be on Introduction and First Read on the first meeting in May and voting on it in the second meeting in May.

Peters mentioned that City staff can give information on this, but they cannot promote it. This will be on the City Council to go out and get support for this tax. Seewood presented the Council with a flyer that explains the city's cash flow and cash balances for the city. Lue mentioned that they are doing cost of service analyses, and will have that for the council for the upcoming budget.

II. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

None.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:34 p.m.