



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Monday, January 5, 2026

6:00 PM

Pre-Council

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Buffaloe called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

City Council Budget Priorities for FY 2027

Attachments: [Presentation](#)

Matthew Lue, Finance Director, reviewed the Council's current priorities, noting that the current Strategic Plan priorities would be updated this year. He noted the main priorities for FY 26 included Public Safety, Affordable Housing, and Employees.

He highlighted some ways the City supported these three priorities with the FY 26 budget. For the affordable housing priority, he noted a substantial increase in housing permits in FY 25. Council person Valerie Carroll noted that she hoped to see more items from the crosswalk from the Boone County Housing Study be linked. She also expressed a desire to find ways to continue funding for the affordable housing fund.

Mayor Barbara Buffaloe asked for clarification on the increase to employee benefits - Lue noted that the City shared the increased cost of medical insurance on to the employees. Kathy Baker, HR Director, added some additional information on this, providing examples for each insurance option. Baker clarified that there was a 10% increase to the gross premium of the City's rate. She noted that the City was self-funded, with medical and claims driving costs. She anticipates medical costs to continue to rise. She noted that the across the board increase approved in the FY 26 budget more than covered any increased costs, adding that the most expensive plan increase would require approximately a \$0.17 per hour raise.

Council member Vera Elwood asked about how to avoid dipping into reserves to keep making employees a priority. Lue noted that cuts would be needed to do this. He added that FY 25 was the first year since the housing crisis that the City saw a decrease in sales tax. Council member Nick Foster asked if the City was still an employer of choice. Baker noted that the City uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as an economic indicator to determine pay increases. Reviews for pay ranges would typically be done every five years, with another review potentially in FY 29.

Foster asked about how priorities are determined and how they are reviewed to know if something could be moved. The Mayor noted that she saw employees being the ones doing the day-to-day, and wondered if that was a given priority.

City Manager De'Carlon Seewood highlighted upcoming opportunities to update our

Strategic Plan, noting that three firms would be interviewed in the coming weeks. He also noted the Community Summit as a way to engage with the community. The Mayor noted that the priorities they identify should help inform the City Manager on what new budget requests are approved. Seewood agreed, noting that revenue enhancements or budget cuts would be part of the overall budget and revenue discussions.

Council member Betsy Peters advocated to keep employees on the list of Council priorities. She added that in the past, this may have led to staff not feeling prioritized. Elwood agreed, adding prioritizing stabilizing employee pay. Carroll noted that not keeping up with pay raises could lead the city to fall behind. She added that staffing for public safety was also tied to this issue.

The Mayor reiterated what Foster brought up, noting what metrics are used to track success towards these priorities. Lue brought up the affordable housing priority, adding that it isn't something the City has complete control over. Seewood noted the crosswalk for the Housing Study could help inform some metrics related to the priority. He agreed that there were other stakeholders involved in housing, but the City could review our processes. Carroll agreed with Seewood, noting that code and fees could be reviewed. Foster agreed as well, expanding that some of their priorities are budgetary, but what they want to accomplish is also beyond budgeting.

Peters expressed a desire to maintain the current list of priorities. The Mayor noted that Infrastructure and Social Services were also listed as priorities in prior years. Council member Don Waterman agreed that the three priorities still made sense, but shared an interest in adding a priority to support increasing economic activity in Columbia.

The Mayor brought up the variability of federal grants, especially related to CDBG funding. She noted that the City needed to be prepared for a situation if that funding went away. Carroll brought up opportunities highlighted in the Housing Study to increase revenue opportunities.

The Mayor asked about the plan for engagement. Seewood noted that a budget schedule has been prepared. The Mayor asked if any guidelines the City Manager shared with departments, such as reducing travel/training budgets, to also be shared with Council.

Lue reviewed the FY 27 Budget Calendar, highlighting engagement activities.

II. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

Elwood asked about a graphic related to a bill on the regular Council agenda. Clint Smith, Community Development Director, provided it.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m.