



# City of Columbia, Missouri

## Meeting Minutes

### City Council

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Monday, April 13, 2026  
6:00 PM

Work Session

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

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#### I. CALL TO ORDER

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

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

Columbia Regional Airport (COU) Discussion

**Attachments:** [Airport Capital Improvement Plan](#)  
[COU Master Plan - Executive Summary](#)  
[Enplanement & Deplanement Data](#)

Mike Parks, Airport Manager, presented. He provided some information about the updated Airport Master Plan, noting that the recent version was from 2024 and 2009 prior to that. He shared information about current and future flight destinations. He noted that the current Plan was guided by the FAA. He noted that some projects from the master plan were recently before Council.

Mike shared information on passenger enplanement forecasts, adding that the airport has higher passenger volumes than forecasted. The Mayor asked if this data influenced other projects. Mike indicated that it did, highlighting the passenger boarding bridge project. Council member Nick Foster asked for clarification about the adjusted number. Mike noted that it was adjusted based on new flights being added. The Mayor asked about any concerns related to flights from Chicago - Mike noted that it was not something the City could control, but it was something staff could monitor. Council member Valerie Carroll asked if there were revenue guarantees for flights to Chicago - Mike noted that there were no revenue guarantees for flights to Chicago.

Mike covered information on the Airport Improvement Program. He added that there was typically 90% funding for capital projects included within that program. He reviewed the process for applying for competitive federal grants. He shared estimated federal funding based on passengers in seats. The Mayor asked about how it would be reported to Council - Mike noted that it would be rolled up into percent federally funded. Carroll asked about soil conditions related to deicing work. Mike noted that there were eight testing sites around the airport. He added that the recent changes came out of multiple conversations with MoDNR. Carroll asked if MoDNR regulates this. Mike noted that they have standards, and require plans if the levels ever exceed those standards.

Mike covered a list of projects, highlighting the importance of safety and noting that many projects are safety related. He reviewed a list of current projects. He referenced interest in hangar rentals, and highlighted the snow removal project as being a way to start this program. He noted that the most recent update to rates and charges took place in 2012,

and that reviewing these rates/charges would be reviewed. He noted that the ultimate goal was for that airport to be self-sustaining. He highlighted the services offered by the airport, including 24 hour fire services.

Council member Don Waterman asked about updated numbers once the rates/charges review was complete. Mike noted that they will work with Finance. Foster asked about the sterile area expansion. Mike noted that it was planned to be expanded to the south. The Mayor asked about timeline - Mike noted that he anticipated this review would be sometime this fall. He did not know if these would be ready for the FY 2027 budget.

Mike shared a snapshot of capital projects over the next five years which reflected just over \$100 million in investment, noting that many would be primarily federally funded. He added that the airport was built in the 1960s. He shared an example from another municipal airport that had to stop commercial operations for several months due to runway repair. He shared a visual of 20 year capital improvement programs highlights. Mike highlighted an upcoming parking project and shared information on the City boundaries.

Mike shared information on the airport's strategic goal to improve connectivity and adding capacity. He shared positive feedback from the Community Summit, noting that participants were happy with their current options. He highlighted the airport growth via seat counts. He shared a graph showing growth compared to other midwest airports. He emphasized the resilience of the region in rebounding from the pandemic. He showed a graphic highlighting Q4 2026 was 523% above Q3 from 2012, and 50% up from the previous peak in Q2 2019.

De'Carlon Seewood, City Manager, brought up the possibility of creating a separate Airport Department. He discussed proposed title and structure changes. De'Carlon noted an upcoming proposal to add shuttle drivers at the airport - Mike noted that this is proposed to begin in June 2026. The Mayor asked for the budgetary impact. Kathy Baker, HR Director, shared preliminary numbers from Finance staff. For a full fiscal year \$406,000 was an approximate estimate for all the proposed changes. Waterman asked if the shuttle drivers would require a CDL - Mike noted that they would not require a CDL, but would require drug testing. Council member Betsy Peters asked for clarification why this needed to be a separate department. De'Carlon noted that it was due to the capacity. Council member Elwood asked about the move of the 0.5 FTE Economic Development Director - De'Carlon noted that it would go back to Economic Development in the General Fund. Elwood asked about why the Airport Manager was not being reassigned, rather than replaced with Airport Director. Kathy noted that it was due to a selection process. The Mayor asked about looking into other cities with airports and what their best practices are. She noted that St. Louis and Kansas City airports were fairly different from Columbia Regional Airport.

Foster expressed support for this. Council member Jacque Sample asked if Mike had an estimate for when the airport would get to self-sustainability. Mike shared that the airport currently charged 0.08 per foot, while other municipal airports were closer to 0.23 per foot. He highlighted that there was room for additional revenue, but it needed to be communicated and justified. He felt the airport offers a lot of good services, and they should charge for the value being offered. Carroll asked about at what size are airports self-sustaining. Mike noted that we could do a better job at charging a reasonable rate for what is being offered. Peters asked why this has not already been done. Foster added that the City seemed to be behind on fees in a number of ways. The Mayor added that multiple reviews were currently in process. De'Carlon shared a brief update on the cost of service study. He estimated that the time frame was later this summer. Carroll asked if

these studies seemed to historically be done by department - the Mayor noted that several in the past have been related to the Utilities, rather than departments in the General Fund. Carroll asked if Payment in Lieu of Taxes were included in the study - De'Carlon noted that he wasn't sure.

The Mayor asked about timeline for staffing changes. De'Carlon noted that it would be later this summer.

Foster asked about any concerns Waterman may have based on his experience on the steering committee. Waterman noted that there were no concerns that were not addressed in the plan.

Gary Thompson, Airport Advisory Board, shared the board's support of the proposed structure. The Mayor asked about the airport's current staffing levels, and noted that the return on investment for the airport was not really highlighted in the master plan.

There are 20 FTEs for the airport, including operation, custodial, and maintenance staff. He added that the Assistant to the Airport Manager position was recently filled. Carroll asked about bandwidth in the City Manager's Office. De'Carlon noted that the additional resources would help make the airport run better.

The Council expressed thanks for Mike's work and the update.

#### Council Work Session Scheduling

Sheela Amin, City Clerk, discussed upcoming work sessions that still needed to be scheduled.

## II. ANY OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

N/A

## III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:32 p.m.