



# City of Columbia, Missouri

## Meeting Minutes

### City Council

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Monday, June 15, 2020  
6:00 PM

Special

Council Chamber  
Columbia City Hall  
701 E. Broadway

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#### I. Roll Call

The City Council of the City of Columbia, Missouri met for a special meeting at 6:00 p.m., on Monday, June 15, 2020, in the Council Chamber of the City of Columbia, Missouri. The roll was taken with the following results: Council Members SKALA, THOMAS, PITZER, PETERS, TREECE, RUFFIN, and TRAPP were present. The City Manager, City Counselor, City Clerk and various Department Heads were also present.

#### II. Comments of Outgoing First Ward Council Member

Mayor Treece asked Mr. Ruffin to join him at the podium.

Mayor Treece stated he would be remiss if he did not recognize Mr. Ruffin for his service to the First Ward, his service to the City Council, and his service to the community. He pointed out that when Mr. Ruffin spoke, people listened, and now more than ever, he was reminded of Mr. Ruffin's words on the eve of his re-election. He explained Mr. Ruffin had indicated he had always considered himself to be an outside agitator, but there was so much to learn, and once he had been allowed to sit at the table where decisions were made, it was a completely different and life-changing experience. He commented that Mr. Ruffin had also recognized the obvious, i.e., he was only the third African-American to serve on the Columbia City Council in its 200 years and each one of them had represented the First Ward. He noted Mr. Ruffin had acknowledged it was a special position to be called to as it had brought with it instant visibility, intense scrutiny, and an important opportunity. Mayor Treece stated Mr. Ruffin had told him that night that he had discovered he had an awesome responsibility as an African-American man, council member, and citizen to represent that community with dignity and consistent integrity, which he pointed out Mr. Ruffin had done every day during his time on the City Council. He commented that Mr. Ruffin had also indicated that the great privilege of serving on the City Council had come with the burden of oftentimes having to be the spokesperson for the people he represented. With the support and encouragement individually and collectively as a Council, he understood Mr. Ruffin felt the community had moved forward to address the issues of racial and economic disparity in the community by acknowledging disparity, but that the journey had only just begun and much more work still needed to be done. Mayor Treece stated that with Mr. Ruffin's journey on the City Council coming to a close, he was reminded of the theme of the Columbia Values Diversity Celebration breakfast this past January, "The Journey Continues." He commented that too often they heard of the fights for civil rights and equal rights, and pointed out the fight for human rights was a marathon, not a sprint, and in the words of Mr. Ruffin three years ago, their journey towards inclusion and equity was not just a marathon, but a relay. It was a relay that required one to train with others, run one's race, and hand the baton off to someone else on the team. He understood they were to acknowledge disparity and run forward to address racial and economic disparity as one community. He asked everyone to join him in recognizing Mr. Ruffin for his time on the City Council.

Mayor Treece presented Mr. Ruffin with a Resolution of Appreciation, a plaque

recognizing his years of service on the Council, a silver tray recognizing his years of service as Mayor Pro Tem, and a certificate for a heritage tree to be planted in his honor in the park of his choice.

Mayor Treece asked Mr. Glascock to join them at the podium. Mr. Glascock thanked Mr. Ruffin for everything he had done for him. He noted Mr. Ruffin had changed him a lot as he had made him think of a lot of things he had not thought about as a human. He presented Mr. Ruffin with a glass tile with the City logo and a gift from City staff, which was a stone commemorating his time on the City Council that could be placed at the Blind Boone Home.

Mr. Ruffin stated this was a very special place, and acknowledged that he stood in the shadow of Almeta Crayton and Harold Warren, the only other African-Americans to serve as members of the City Council. He noted they had created an open space for him to become a reflection of their vision of what was possible, and he was grateful for them. He commented that he was also grateful for the memories of the relationships forged over the past five years with those whose names were too numerous to mention. He had memories involving those that had decided he should run, those that had collected signatures, and those that had campaigned for and with him, the late night council meetings, afternoon task force meetings, all-day budget meetings, weekend community meetings, the thousands of voicemails, emails, and text messages, the trail dedications, the "welcome to the City of Columbia" speeches, epic failures, extraordinary victories, laughter, disappointments, protests when things were very wrong, an occasional praise when they had managed to get things right, and the myriad of faces of concerned citizens that had stood at the podium. Those memories had given him a great gift, a vision of what was possible when a gathering of uncommon people were able to stand on common ground. He explained he had learned that they needed visionaries, but that they also needed those that could breathe life into the vision. They needed policymakers, but also those that were able to see the human implications within those policies. They needed planners, but also those with the strength and determination to implement the plans. They needed decision-makers, but also those that recognized that every decision impacted the well-being of ordinary people. When they recognized they were distinctively different, providentially connected, and equally valuable, he felt all things could be possible. He commented that working together with his City Council colleagues and the City staff often reminded him of the dynamics of his original family. His mother was 93½ years old, and much like the City of Columbia, she was mentally sharp, wide awake, and one had to be transparent or else, but also like the City, she had some infrastructure issues, i.e., leaky pipes, transportation challenges, and unending maintenance. He stated he and his siblings did the best they could to make sure she was taken care of. He explained his brother would stop by her house to cut her grass and get her car washed, his sister, who lived in across the street, took her trash to the curb, provided her something to eat, and drove her to church on Sundays, and since he was the only one not living in Kansas City, he took care of her finances, paperwork, and legal work. Not unlike the citizens of Columbia, his mother would occasionally get an attitude and would begin to complain when she felt one of them was not doing what she wanted, when she wanted, and how she wanted it done. He commented that he would have to remind his mother to push the pause button and to recognize that when they each did what they were capable of doing, their combined effort ensured that even at her age with all of her infrastructure challenges, she was able to continue living, learning, working in her garden, and even playing on a good day when they were able to hook up her CD player for the entire family to gather to line dance on her grass. He noted that with that in mind, he wanted to share a few words of a final tribute written by Maya Angelou, "My wish for you is that you continue. Continue to be who and how you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness. Continue to allow humor to lighten the burden of your tender heart. Continue in a society dark with cruelty to let the people hear the grandeur of God in the

peals of your laughter. Continue to let your eloquence elevate the people to heights they had only imagined. Continue to remind people that each is as good as the other and that no one is beneath nor above you. Continue to remember your own young years and look with favor upon the lost and the least and the lonely. Continue to put the mantel of your protection around the bodies of the young and the defenseless. Continue to take the hand of the despised and diseased and walk proudly with them in the high street, some might see you and be encouraged to do likewise. Continue to plant a public kiss of concern on the cheek of the sick and the aged and infirm and count that as a natural action just to be expected. Continue to let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer and let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good. Continue to ignore no vision which comes to enlarge your range and increase your spirit. Continue to dare to love deeply to risk everything for the good thing. Continue to float happily in the sea of infinite substance which set aside opportunities for you before you had a name. Continue and by doing so you and your work will be able to continue eternally.”

### **III. Oath of Office of Newly Elected First Ward Council Member and Fifth Ward Council Member**

The City Clerk administered the Oath of Office to Council Member, Matt Pitzer, and Mayor Treece presented him with a framed Commission of Office.

The City Clerk administered the Oath of Office to Council Member Pat Fowler, and Mayor Treece presented her with a framed Commission of Office.

Everyone then took their places at the dais.

### **IV. Comments of Newly Elected First Ward Council Member and Fifth Ward Council Member**

Mr. Pitzer thanked Mr. Ruffin for his service and noted it had been an honor and pleasure to serve with him. He stated he looked forward to the same with Ms. Fowler.

Ms. Fowler commented that she was grateful for the opportunity to be in the front of the room and not back in her usual space by the outlets even when knowing she would soon feel some nostalgia for the anonymity she had held there. She stated she was grateful for the 17 years of role modeling the citizens of Columbia had given her, i.e., the careful examples of how to navigate difficult situations well, the crises of confidence and faith, and the broken-heartedness they had experienced together over the past three months, and more importantly, over the past three weeks. She commented that she was in this position 10 years sooner than she had thought in large part due to the outpouring of support, time, and energy from each of them and some neighborhood volunteers. She recognized Jan, Pam, Jennifer, Susan, Maria, Leigh, Kate, Chuck, Mary, Christine, Brett, Dee, Renee, Valerie, Rosalie, Natalie, Patti, Lynn, Jevonne, and Xylia along with others across the community that had answered her call for help. She also recognized James, Tyree, Nate, Debbie, and Norman as she was honored to have their support. She thanked Mr. Ruffin for his kindness from the day she had filed to run for this seat to the days leading up to today, which included his wise and steady guidance, and noted she knew where to find him on Sunday mornings. She also thanked Brian Treece and Mary Phillips who had been her friends since she had met them at the choir loft 16 years ago as they had encouraged her, put her in situations where she could succeed, and consoled her through the loss of people that she and the community loved. She recognized Barbara Hoppe and Karl Skala for explaining and showing her how policy was made after she had attended her first Smart Growth Coalition meeting when she had been angry about flooding in her neighborhood. She thanked Bill Gorman, her employer, for his support in her running for City Council. She also recognized Shaunda Hamilton for her

courage during her and her family's profound loss as it had lifted her and others up in terms of working with her and Boone County Community Against Violence with regard to jobs for their young people and public safety design and services to ensure those they loved were safe. She explained she was one of seven kids in a two-household family raised by three parents, Marilyn, who passed when she was 24, Nathaniel, who passed when she was 46, and Diane, now 86, who lived nearby and had been married to her dad for 42 years. As she had grown from a little kid into a young adult with an oversized sense that only she could fix it, whatever it was, each of her parents repeated that no one did it alone and no one went it alone. She hoped they could see that over the past 20 years that message had seeped into her soul. She was seated at the dais because they had done this City stuff, i.e., advocacy, activism, and seeking equity for older neighborhoods along with equality for families. She commented that she would not forget that there were hundreds of people outside of the room that were exhausted and dealing with so much more than her. At the national level, the idealized goals of patriotism, i.e., their love of country, had been partisanized and weaponized against the status quo and people who dared to speak up as their young people had done repeatedly, daily, nightly, and even more so since the killing of George Floyd. She stated social media could be succinct and eloquent as in the post her friend Howard had shared last week under the heading of Black Lives Matter, which said, "Treat racism like COVID-19. Assume you have it. Listen to experts about it. Do not spread it. Be willing to change your life to end it." She commented that their charge was clear as they needed to be willing to change their lives to end it. She pointed out yesterday was Flag Day, and she liked the reminder of Flag Day because she refused to allow forces within the country to hijack one of their symbols for their own divisive purposes. She believed they would rise from the ashes of more than one tragedy against their humanity, including the violent deaths of Black Americans and children of color. They would continue to fight the virus that took the medically fragile and the lives and economic health of African-Americans disproportionately over white and wealthier people. She stated she had expectations about the part of the meeting when they recited the Pledge, not only because it represented the status quo, which in part it did, but because it aspirationally reminded her of what was important and what could be as long as the promise of the community coming together in shared purpose rang true, and that included loving their kids, caring for their seniors, and providing for the least, the lost, and the left behind with the same care and attention that they gave to the resourced, the resilient, and the financially secure. She commented that where they laid their heads at night was a sacred space and the zip code of her pillow and her neighbor's pillow was just as important as that of everyone else. She understood patriotism best by translating it in her head, and when she loudly said "and justice for all" at the end of the Pledge, she channeled the concepts she later learned had been left out of Francis Bellamy's 1892 draft, i.e., equality, fidelity, liberty, and justice for all. She commented that her pledge to the citizens was that she would ask the questions and build enough consensus around the idea that they must examine their actions and admit who was advantaged and disadvantaged by the policies they approved, the votes they took, and the budget appropriations they made. She believed they needed to adapt their consumption of resources to protect the planet so their children would equitably prosper. Policy should not diminish vulnerable neighborhoods and African-Americans in favor of wealthier and white ones. Those in the First Ward could no longer carry the burdens of others unless they also and with as much intention carried theirs. She asked that the citizens invite her, include her, argue with her when she was wrong, steady her for the obstacles ahead when they were correct, and stick with her while they did the work together. She thanked them for their confidence in her ability to represent the First Ward.

Mr. Skala stated his appreciation for Clyde Ruffin. He noted they had been neighbors in the early 1990s when they both resided in Lakewood Estates just outside of the City

boundaries on the northeast side of town. He commented that it had been a privilege to serve with him. He explained he had worked with a few councils, mayors, and city managers, and noted the reason some were special was because they could always count on the others at the dais to ask the questions they might not have the time to ask or had forgotten to ask. Those groups were good as they were working toward the best interest of the community. He stated Columbia was a wonderful place to live, work, grow, and play, and thanked Mr. Ruffin for his participation and contributions to the Council.

Mr. Trapp commented that he had first met Mr. Ruffin when he had called him to tell him that he would be running for the Second Ward Council seat to which Mr. Ruffin had responded okay. He explained his campaign advisors had not realized that Mr. Ruffin had been redistricted out of the Second Ward. He stated Mr. Ruffin had been a great representative of the First Ward. He appreciated the approach of Mr. Ruffin, to include his thoughtful independence of each issue by listening carefully to what was presented and then coming to the right decision as Mr. Ruffin had been a part of the majority most of the time. He commented that sometimes governance could be difficult because there was a gap between their dreams and expectations and the practical realities of moving forward right then, and Mr. Ruffin had been bold in that pragmatic practicality. He stated he loved Mr. Ruffin's analogy of the City of Columbia as an aging mother and his fellow council members as siblings, and he was proud to have Mr. Ruffin as a brother. He had always thought of himself as a single parent raising an unruly child who needed him when he was sick or well, called on him at all hours of the day and night, and sometimes pooped all over him, and he felt better about Mr. Ruffin's analogy. He noted that as he had listened to the Maya Angelou quote of finding a little humor in the dark, he believed how they had done things in the past had fallen short and did not feel they could continue in that manner. He believed they would be forced to be more equitable and more just and cooler with each other. He stated he was excited to know Mr. Ruffin would always be a part of those processes and thanked him his service.

Mr. Thomas congratulated and thanked Mr. Ruffin for all that he had done for the City Council. He commented that it had been a particular pleasure for him to co-chair the Pedestrian Safety Task Force with Mr. Ruffin. He felt that had been a good example of a really good process that had resulted in great success. He wished Mr. Ruffin the best in everything that was ahead. He also welcomed Ms. Fowler to the City Council and stated he had been thrilled to see her centering public transit and affordable housing in her campaign. He looked forward to working with her.

Ms. Peters thanked Mr. Ruffin for the five years he had served on the City Council as they had started at the same time. She stated her appreciation for working with him.

## **V. Appointment of Mayor Pro Tem**

Mayor Treece asked for the consent of Council to reappoint Mr. Skala as the Mayor Pro Tem. He noted he valued Mr. Skala's seniority and institutional history, and would be grateful if he continued to serve. Mr. Skala stated it would be an honor. Mayor Treece asked if anyone objected, and no one objected.

## **VI. Appointment to New Century Fund Inc. Board**

Mayor Treece explained he had been serving on the New Century Fund Inc. Board and was happy to continue in that role unless someone else wanted to serve. Since no one indicated a desire to serve, Mayor Treece stated he would continue to serve.

## **VII. Other Items the Council May Wish to Discuss**

Mayor Treece noted the liaison position to the Community Land Trust Organization Board was currently vacant. As a result, he had asked Ms. Fowler if she wanted to serve in that

role as a number of the properties were in the First Ward, but noted he would be willing to open it up to anyone else if there was interest.

Mayor Treece made a motion to appoint Ms. Fowler as the City Council liaison to the Community Land Trust Organization Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Mr. Trapp and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Mayor Treece explained the Youth Advisory Council also had a City Council liaison. He noted it was currently Ms. Peters, and asked Ms. Peters if she would like to continue in that role. Ms. Peters replied she would be happy to continue serving.

Mayor Treece made a motion to allow Ms. Peters to continue serving as the City Council liaison to the Youth Advisory Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Skala and approved unanimously by voice vote.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.