



# City of Columbia, Missouri

## Meeting Minutes

### City Council

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Monday, March 15, 2021  
6:00 PM

Pre-Council

Council Chamber  
Columbia City Hall  
701 E. Broadway

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#### I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Mayor at approximately 6:05 p.m.

**Present:** 7 - Trapp, Thomas, Peters, Treece, Skala, Pltzer, and Fowler

Potential Use of Reserve Funds

**Attachments:** [Potential Use of Reserve Funds](#)

Director of Finance, Matthew Lue presented on the potential use of reserve funds.

The first thing discussed was a proposed business license and health inspection rebate program. This would reimburse businesses for their license and health inspection fees from 2020. The Mayor had previously asked about the number of restaurants and bars that have these licenses and its about 571 places. This would cost about \$328,000. A second proposed item was for hotel/motel and concert venue reimbursement for COVID related expenses. Mayor Treece asked if it had been worked out for how it would be handled? City Manager John Glascock said that there would be reimbursements for having to put up plexi glass or other safety precautions that were not anticipated. Treece clarified that these would not be reimbursements for business losses.

Lue said this is in response to the potential funding we could receive for reimbursement for 2020 expenses.

Council Member Pitzer asked if a concert venue that has a liquor license would be reimbursed for that and then also reimbursed for covid expenses? Lue said that would be correct. Other businesses would not be eligible for reimbursement of plexiglass and PPE.

Lue explained three pieces for a public assistance program. In this it would include: utility assistance program to provide assistance for eligible City utility customers, vocational training assistance for emergency support function (ESF) #14 - long-term community recovery, and affordable housing funding for City land purchased for development of 4 additional affordable owner-occupied homes.

There were three internal pandemic related improvements presented. The first was a Council Chamber redesign to extend the dias to accommodate all Council members as well as updates to video and audio equipment in the Council Chambers and meeting rooms 1A/1B. The second was a Municipal Court redesign to accommodate ADA accessibility. The third was a first floor customer experience to have improvements to the mezzanine area to accommodate support staff.

Other identified uses were for FY21 public safety overtime expenses. Fire would need \$550,000 and police would need \$100,000 to cover overtime expenses. Another use would be for FY21 wage increases, and a FY21/22 wage and benefits study.

Council Member Peters asked about overtime expenses. Clarifying, that we are currently already paying our police and firefighters, and trying to understand the need for this allocation of funding. Lue responded that while we are currently paying our police and firefighters for overtime, these expenses are above and beyond what was originally planned and set aside for overtime payouts. Currently, the City is using reserve money for the owed time. The amount of overtime both departments have had to expunge is due to the pandemic.

Treece made a statement that they believe the money should be used to either stimulate the economy, to help workers or families or businesses recover, but also how do we look at the long-term impacts of the pandemic to make our community better than we were before. Treece asked if there was an investment we could make in our community that makes us more resilient to what happened in the past, but also makes us attractive in terms of long-term economic benefit from this. Treece was looking for a way that Council can agree on how to invest this money, despite the Council Members' individual opinions of investments.

Council Member Fowler shared how they are particularly concerned about the folks that were marginally able to meet their needs before COVID-19 and are now behind and will take longer for them to catch up. The working from home dilemma that was mentioned is actually a block to an upper promotional path for many people. If someone does not have a computer or internet than they are not able to apply for some of these office jobs that would provide better for families. Fowler said that they would prefer to have a focus on meeting the unmet needs of our community and bringing our economy back.

Peters expressed support for looking broadly at what goals we are trying to meet and involve our strategic plan to look at things more globally rather than one piece at a time.

Council Member Trapp added that Council should strongly consider funding and support from the community that has perceived harms from the City's actions in how the City managed the pandemic. In addition to obtaining strategic objectives to addressing inequity and growing the City economically, the Council should try to make right things that were inadvertently disrupted by our greater priority for a safe community. Trapp expressed support for the business license rebate program.

Fowler shared that they had been in communication over the weekend with a variety of people from the community to give feedback on their feelings for these proposed spending items. There are still people who are not getting the help that they need. Fowler asked if it was possible to do something with a larger amount of money to assist those agencies with a different set of criteria to support those who are not able to be served. Fowler also shared that a person on the call they had over the weekend brought up the availability of childcare to be able to pick yourself up out of public housing. Specifically this is an issue with COVID-19 due to kids being in virtual schooling. The third thing Fowler brought up was resource centers throughout the community. How can we bring these out closer to people

in the community so they can assess more information and connect to some of the services as they become available. Fowler brought up also a fourth point of festival people. Fowler asked if the City can provide upfront funding for those PPE items for festivals and events for them to help give jobs to those people who use these employment opportunities to help provide for their families. Fowler also brought up vocational training as an area for funding, that later on in the regular Council agenda there is a discussion item of Plumrose, and that when that factory is built there will be more better paid jobs and opportunities for the community. The issue is, how do we get people without regular transportation up to the corridor? Fowler shared that they agree the Municipal Court desperately needs a redesign, but they have trouble with the other proposed remodeling. They feel like there are so many other folks in the community struggling with how they come back and receive their prior income. Treece commented on that point and said that City hall is 10 years old and it was designed for there to be 7 Council members. Currently, Council Members Thomas and Peters sit at the lower levels and it would be preferred if they could be raised up. Depending on the growth of the City, there may need to be a new Ward added, meaning a new Council Member. In regards to the first floor customer experience, between the pandemic and other security issues there is public facing staff who work above the first floor and the public used to be able to just walk up there. Treece wants to preserve that, but at the same time make it as convenient and safe as possible for everyone who wants to get into City hall to do their business and know they are at the right place.

Trapp shared that they think the remodel is legitimate. Everyone has their own internal needs, and Trapp has a heart for people struggling and has spent a lot of time with people who had a tough 2020. Trapp said that they trust Randy Cole and Steve Hollis to make the best decisions on how to spend the money. Trapp expressed support for Fowler's suggestions since it is the City's own funds, creating a more accessible without the erroneous rules for funding organizations that need it through the pandemic.

Treece asked if they had a sense of utility disconnect money is spent and obligated by CMCA? Randy Cole said it has not been. Treece then asked if they think there is a need to put more money in it? Cole has been working more closely with providing rent assistance. Steve Hollis has been working more with utility assistance. Treece asked if there was an individual cap on what each household could receive in terms of funding assistance? Cole said there was, and there was still a backlog of owed bills because of that.

Fowler brought up the unsheltered homeless, and the chronically homeless and how COVID-19 has only made the situation worse. The Room at The Inn closed the day prior to the Council meeting, and we still have homeless people needing places to sleep. Fowler said that trying to find the right mix of contribution from the City to propel forward an effort that is underway to be able to provide a location for food assistance, housing overnight, and activity and job training. Fowler said that funding these initiatives would be her preference.

Lue said that they had a conversation with Steve Hollis in regards to utility assistance programs that could use attention. Steve Hollis presented and said that CMCA has limited funding to energy assistance. This means that other utility assistance is not met, but it can be through CARES but it will run out at some point. For the CASH and HELP programs, there have been significant decreases

in funding for it. Hollis presented the idea that a new program could help and that what Lue was presenting could be a seed to a more permanent solution for a similar program. There are technical things with CASH and HELP that are detailed in City ordinance where someone can only use it 5 times.

Fowler asked if Hollis had known about the applications that Power House and Rock the Community had submitted as they were proposing ideas and ways to reach a larger number of people to be served. Hollis said that they are aware of them and are trying to get them help.

Treece asked Fowler if they had a sense of needs for Rock the Community and Power House. Fowler responded with how they would spend the money up for discussion is to split it in half. Half of the money would be set aside for programs for those who have suffered the most financially and put the other half aside to figure out ways to deliver more services to those populations.

Peters asked Fowler if they were talking about the half of the money for public assistance? Fowler said they were asking for \$1.5 million to be set aside for public assistance funding.

Council Member Thomas said they like where the conversation is going. There are systemic forces that make life very difficult for people on the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Thomas said they support having 50% of these funds go to those who are homeless, housing insecure, or food insecure. Looking at the other categories, they are not sure of the importance for the Council Chambers redesign, aside from the technology to allow for virtual participation, being important. Thomas would prefer to see the funding helping those who were hurt the most due to the pandemic.

Treece asked how much the City Manager would need for city employee pay adjustments? Glascock responded that it would be \$1.3 million needed. Treece shared that they would prefer to keep in mind those people who have been on the frontlines of the pandemic. Not just the police and firefighters but the refuse collectors and others who have not been able to work from home in the past year.

Treece also asked if we had any County reimbursement money? If we had received any check from the county for contact tracing or anything? Lue responded that the City had not received anything yet from the County and does not know when to expect to receive that check.

Lue asked what the Council would like to see as additions to the list of how to spend the funding? Treece asked if Lue saw a consensus from Council on how to spend the money? Lue responded that they did. Glascock said that they would bring forward the wages for the staff and have Cole and Hollis bring forward a plan for Council to approve. Treece asked to also put a dent into the licenses establishments as well.

The Council Chamber, First Floor Customer Experience, and the Municipal Court redesign was put off to be included in FY22.

## **II. ALL OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS**

## **III. ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:65 p.m.**

Tentative Future Item Topics:

Members of the public may attend any open meeting. For requests for accommodations related to disability, please call 573-874-CITY (573-874-2489) or email [CITY@CoMo.gov](mailto:CITY@CoMo.gov). In order to assist staff in making the appropriate arrangements for your accommodation, please make your request as far in advance of the posted meeting date as possible.