

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS, COLUMBUS, MONTANA HELD May 5, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M.

COUNCIL PRESENT OFFICERS PRESENT	The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Webb Mandeville began the meeting with the pledge of allegiance. The council persons present were Rick White, Dennis Holten, Tim Mayo, Cole Waltner, Bob Fitzgerald and Danen Johannes. Staff members present were Fire Chief Rich Cowger, Chief of Police Aaron Uecker, City Attorney Ryan Addis, and Deputy Clerk Cassidy Thompson.
SIDELINE IN PERSON	Branden Timm, Tim and Jennifer Avalone, and Charles Denison
PUBLIC HEARING	NONE
REGULAR MINUTES APPROVED	The mayor asked the council if they had reviewed the minutes of the April 21, 2025, regular meeting, and if there were any additions, deletions, or corrections. Rick White made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting, seconded by Dennis Holten; roll call for vote, Rick White, Dennis Holten, Tim Mayo, Cole Waltner, and Danen Johannes, all yea votes. Motion passed. Bob Fitzgerald abstained from voting due to missing the last council meeting.
SHUT OFF LIST	NONE
APPROVAL OF CLAIMS	The claims list for the 2 nd half of April was presented to the Council. Tim Mayo made a motion to approve the claims as presented, seconded by Cole Waltner. Danen Johannes asked Cassidy Thompson if she knew anything about the city being charged \$3 per mile to travel from Billings for work on an aluminum door. Cassidy confirmed it was for the front door entrance. Danen was asking about Visa card accounts and specific purchases from Amazon. Danen pointed out the inconsistency of tracking purchased items and wanted to understand more about why some of these things were needed. Danen wanted to make sure we were being judicious about what the city is spending money on. Roll call for vote, Danen Johannes, Bob Fitzgerald, Cole Waltner, Tim Mayo, Dennis Holten and Rick White, all yea votes. Motion passed.
PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS	Ed May wanted to discuss redoing the sidewalks at St. Mary's Church but could not be present due to road conditions. Peyton Brookshire provided an email with five questions that Ed May wanted to ask. Webb Mandeville read each one off the list. Must a concrete contractor be certified / approved for work performed in the city? Webb replied that he thinks we require them to be insured. If certification is required, is there a published process for gaining certification? Please confirm that if work is performed on sidewalks and / or curbs, ramp entry from street to walkways must be installed to ADA standards - or not? Webb said that he believes that these must be installed to ADA standards. Because curbs are deteriorating and sinking in several areas along our property, will the city of Columbus consider partnering with St. Mary's Church to remove the damaged areas and replace with curb and ramps to standard? Webb said according to the ordinance, the only option is to pay for it themselves. Dennis Holten mentioned that the city in the past has covered costs for handicap ramps, as long as they follow ADA standards. Danen Johannes asked Dennis Holten if he recalls when they redid the sidewalk from the elementary school to the high school in 1994 or 1995. Danen asked if the school had paid for the work. Dennis replied that it was actually the CTIP Grant that was obtained back in the day. Is there a published standard that dictates

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	when sidewalk repairs must be undertaken? Webb said he did not see that in the regulations, so he does not believe there is.
FIRE DEPT.	The Fire Chief was present and provided a report.
POLICE	The Police Chief was present and provided a report.
PUBLIC WORKS	The Public Works Director was not present but provided a report.
ATTORNEY	The City Attorney was present and provided a report.
CITY JUDGE	The City Judge was not present and did not provide a report.
CLERK-TREASURER	The Clerk-Treasurer was not present but provided a report.
PUBLIC COMMENT ON CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS:	NONE
COMMITTEE REPORTS-	NONE
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	Approval to add additional police officer position to the Police Department. Cole Waltner made a motion to approve, seconded by Rick White. Dennis Holten said that he visited with Aaron about Cherrie McAlexander advising Aaron that the city had plenty of money in the budget to afford another officer. Dennis stressed that the city needs to make sure that we have enough revenue coming in through taxes to cover that. Dennis said that he went through revenue reports along with expenditure reports for the general fund. Dennis said what he found in the reports did not seem to cover the funds needed for an additional officer. Danen Johannes said he was talking to people in his ward about adding another officer and they were curious about how this will affect them financially. Danen mentioned that when Bill Pronovost was the chief, his department had three vehicles, and the budget was about \$580,000. Danen said he also spoke with the County Commissioners about how many deputies the county has, there are fifteen. Danen said people in his ward mentioned that they see multiple officers along with sheriffs pulling over a single vehicle in Columbus. Danen said that the county commissioners are dealing with the budget as well and are requesting each department to cut their budget by ten percent. Danen expressed that he is worried because instead of doing that, the city is adding more and more to our budget. Danen said in regard to adding another officer, he spoke with a scheduling expert. They said that in order to cover seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, five people can manage them on eight-hour shifts. Danen mentioned that the city police does not work eight hour shifts but instead twelve hours. Danen mentioned that there are studies that twelve-hour shifts are not good because there are eight hours of overtime per officer per week. Danen suggested using the resources that we

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	<p>have instead of spending more money. Danen also mentioned that the city court told him that this year was the lowest year for citations in the last ten years. Danen's main concern is the public being able to afford added fees. Tim Mayo pointed out several cities or towns with six officers or more with a population that is lower than Columbus. Cole Waltner said that he had visited Cherrie McAlexander about other city's budgets. Cole said Columbus is either spending a comparable or lesser percentage in our budget compared to many cities or towns for public safety. Danen brought up the part timers from the county and Cole stated that most of the part timers work for the sheriff's office and have had their budget cut by ten percent. Bob Fitzgerald mentioned the instance of biased in the conservation district. Bob said he felt that if you worked for law enforcement that you will have a biased opinion on this matter, and it would not be hard to manipulate statistics. Bob said the bottom line is, can the city afford it. Chief Aaron Uecker asked to be a part of the discussion and Webb invited him in. Aaron mentioned that he visited with Cherrie about the budget and she said that the city had the money. Aaron stated that if Cherrie gave any indication that the city does not have the funds to cover an additional officer, that they would not all be sitting there discussing this matter. Aaron asked the council about how many of them approached Cherrie about the numbers. Aaron also stated that the Columbus Police department will never work eight-hour shifts. Aaron explained that it is unreasonable to only have a limited two days off with the mental and physical strain of their job. Aaron also expressed that his employees enjoy their twelve-hour shifts. Aaron said that the police department has been overrun with calls and that is why there has been a decline in citations. Aaron finally said if the council was unconcerned with the safety of the town, then they could vote no. Danen added that he would like to see where Cherrie stated this revenue is coming from. Roll call for vote, Danen Johannes voted no, Bob Fitzgerald voted no, Cole Waltner voted yes, Tim Mayo voted yes, Dennis Holten voted no, and Rick White voted yes. Mayor Webb Mandeville voted yes, breaking the tie. Motion passed.</p> <p>Approval of License Agreement and Release for access to City Dump with Timothy Avallone. Dennis Holten made a motion for approval, seconded by Rick White. Ryan Addis mentioned that there were two versions and the one with red lines are with changes made and went over them. Roll call for vote, Rick White, Dennis Holten, Tim Mayo, Cole Waltner, Bob Fitzgerald and Danen Johannes, all yea votes. Motion passed.</p>
NEW BUSINESS	<p>Approval of Special Use Permit for Columbus Evangelical Church 100-year celebration at Heritage Park from 12pm to 9pm on July 6, 2025. Rick White made a motion for approval, seconded by Cole Waltner. Roll call for vote, Danen Johannes, Bob Fitzgerald, Cole Waltner, Tim Mayo, Dennis Holten and Rick White, all yea votes. Motion passed.</p> <p>First reading of Ordinance 372-2025 – Establishing Sign Permits, Fees, and Restrictions for Granite Peake Park. Dennis Holten made a motion to waive the</p>

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	first reading, seconded by Tim Mayo. Roll call for vote, Rick White, Dennis Holten, Tim Mayo, Cole Waltner, Bob Fitzgerald and Danen Johannes, all yea votes. Motion passed. Cole Waltner made a motion to pass the ordinance on the first reading, seconded by Dennis Holten. Roll call for vote, Rick White, Dennis Holten, Tim Mayo, Cole Waltner, Bob Fitzgerald and Danen Johannes, all yea votes. Motion passed.
COMMENTS NOT ON THE AGENDA	NONE
ADJOURNMENT	Webb Mandeville requested a Motion to Adjourn. Rick White made the motion to adjourn at 7:42 p.m. seconded by Tim Mayo, roll call all yea votes.


WEBB MANDEVILLE, MAYOR


CASSIDY THOMPSON, DEPUTY CLERK