



UPDATED: City Council approves new bus shelters, hears report on roll carts

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COLUMBIA — Here's what the Columbia City Council did and considered on Monday night during its second regular meeting of October.

This article was updated as the meeting unfolded and is organized in reverse chronological order.

CLOSING COMMENTS — HOMELESS SHELTER

First Ward Councilman Clyde Ruffin said he is working with the Columbia Alliance to Combat Homelessness “to build a comprehensive shelter for the homeless” to service the community year-round.

He said he has met with neighborhood representatives, adding that while some residents are in favor of the shelter, many do not want it built near residential areas.

The shelter would have room for about 50 homeless men and would have been located on North Eighth Street, according to previous Missourian reporting. A vote was initially scheduled for Oct. 5.

Calling their concerns “legitimate,” Ruffin said plans for the shelter have been put on hold.

REPORT ON COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

The Mayor’s Task Force on Community Violence in 2014 provided a number of recommendations the city could take to reduce violence. On Monday night, the council got a report on the status of those recommendations.

Fifth Ward Councilwoman Laura Nauser asked for residents to read the report and provide feedback. A meeting about the report is scheduled for Oct. 28.

The report said that, among several programs receiving new funding, the Healthy Families America program received more than \$300,000 from the state Health Department, and the Teen Outreach program received more than \$90,000 from the county and state.

The task force also noted that social service funding was "at its lowest level since 2008," and that no money had yet been allocated to track the county's "highest risk offenders."

Second Ward Councilman Michael Trapp and Fourth Ward Councilman Ian Thomas spoke highly of community groups that have been pushing for the task force's recommendations to be implemented.

The report categorized community violence as a “public health issue,” and the task force asked for more job training programs and increased coordination between existing programs. It also asked for the construction of a Youth Community Cultural Center and for more resources to be directed at public schools in an effort to help at-risk students.

The task force also asked the Columbia Police Department to embrace community policing models and for more resources to oversee the 40 or so ex-offenders who return to the county each month.

Violent crime has decreased in Columbia since 2011, according to data on the city's website.

REPORT ON ROLL CARTS

The council received a report from City Clerk Sheela Amin declaring that a petition seeking to ban the use of roll carts or automated trash collection or to put the matter to a public vote has been certified.

If the council rejects the petition, voters must decide the future of roll carts in Columbia. According to city ordinance, the election would have to be held March 15.

The council will vote on the petition at its next meeting.

REPORT ON GREEKTOWN PARKING

Delta Gamma, a MU sorority at 900 S. Providence Road, has asked the city to amend its parking code to create rules that would apply to all sororities and fraternities.

The council voted to discuss this at a later date.

Delta Gamma requested that residents be able to park on property the sorority owns but that is not connected to its main house. This would require its additional property to be rezoned for residential parking, since city ordinance now requires residences to mainly use parking adjacent to houses.

The new rule would require that parking be within 500 feet of a main residence.

The sorority's request comes at a time when MU's enrollment is the highest it has ever been. The sorority is planning to rebuild on property to accommodate more residents. The sorority can house 50 students now, and would like to house 90, according to its letter to the city.

STADIUM AND OLD 63 INTERSECTION

The council took the first steps toward a \$1.2 million project for the intersection of Stadium Boulevard and Old 63 that was approved in July. The money would be used to add crosswalks, turn lanes and general beautification. Although the city is preparing to call for bids, the project still needs the permission of one property owner.

STUART PARKER APARTMENTS

The council allocated \$101,750 to renovate three public housing dwellings on Hicks Drive that are part of the Stuart Parker Apartments. The 2014 budget approved \$150,000 for the same development, but several delays have pushed back the construction schedule.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Boone Hospital Center received approval to add a 6-foot directional sign on a wall at its south campus at Forum and Nifong boulevards. The city's zoning code requires special approval for the sign because it was taller than 3 feet. Size limits depend on sign size and location. Boone Hospital agreed to remove two other signs in exchange for the city's approval.
- The council voted to take \$4,300 from the city's New Century Fund endowment to clean and repair the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial at Battle Garden.
- It also approved the replacement of sewer systems on 10 properties near Poplar Hill Drive and South Bethel Church Road. Construction of 2,200 feet of new sanitary sewer lines will begin this winter for about \$300,000. Because about \$244,000 of that cost will be deferred, about \$1,000 will be added to the sewer utility's annual costs. The properties are part of a sewer district that was created in 2008.
- A taxi stand on Tenth Street will be moved south of Broadway from its location north of Broadway. The construction of The Lofts On Broadway, a recently built student apartment complex, led to the move.

LED LIGHTS DOWNTOWN

The council accepted \$2,500 and 25 LED lights from the Downtown Community Improvement District.

Ten of the lights will be installed in the parking garage on Eighth and Cherry streets, which will be paid for by the district's cash donation. Another 11 sconces will replace lights in Alley A and the alley north of Broadway and west of Ninth Street for about \$4,000. The city set aside that money in the 2016 budget.

Katie Essing, the district's executive director, said she had accompanied police officers to see where lights were needed downtown.

“It’s pretty dramatic how dark many of these alleys are,” she said.

The city estimates it will save money by using LED lights instead of the old street lighting, according to city documents. The community improvement district is funded largely through a sales tax, which has brought in more revenue over the past few years than originally projected.

NEW BUS SHELTERS

Eighteen new bus shelters will be installed at 14 locations around the city, including two on Broadway and four on Worley Street. City staff worked with MU's architecture program and held a student competition before settling on the final design.

Each shelter will cost about \$11,000, from a total budget of \$569,705 that is partially funded by the transportation sales tax. However, \$20,000 has been set aside for each shelter in order to also repair sidewalks and other infrastructure. Besides routine maintenance, the council anticipates no additional long-term expenses.

The city has 26 bus shelters, though seven are not in use. Additional locations have been identified for future expansion.

Ruffin said it was good so many of the shelters are in the First Ward, saying this moves the city closer to “social equity.”

During the public hearing, many residents spoke in favor of the new shelters.

Cheryl Price, who chairs the city's Public Transit Advisory Commission, spoke about the importance of “safe and comfortable shelters” and agreed with Ruffin that transportation should be available to “all citizens.”

J. Hasbrouck Jacobs, a member of the Columbia Library District Board, said the library’s current bus shelter is “adequate,” but asked that the library be consulted if it is to receive a new shelter. He said that 1,700 people use the library every day, many of whom rely on public transit.

Another resident, Deborah Caruso, wrote in a public comment form that she supported the new bus shelters but asked that trash cans accompany them because of the cigarette butts, broken glass and garbage that accumulated at the stop in front of her house.

Current plans do include trash cans at each shelter.

Dennis Thompson said one bus shelter would be in his “backyard,” and he said he was concerned both about his responsibility maintaining the surrounding property and the potential for property damage.

Traci Wilson-Kleekamp said she was “happy” about the new shelters but “cranky” about the lack of shelters on Providence Road.

Council members were cautiously supportive. Fourth Ward Councilman Ian Thomas was optimistic of the “positive trajectory” of Columbia public transportation. Third Ward Councilman Kari Skala was skeptical of the shelter’s \$11,000 price tag, and said he was worried too much money was being allocated to aesthetics.

“It gives me great pleasure to agree with Mr. Skala about frugality,” Mayor Bob McDavid said.

McDavid said the city had to be held accountable for how it spent money and hoped the next few years would see the installation of 50 new bus shelters.

PUBLIC COMMENT: MENTAL HEALTH, RACE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Sky Jimenez asked that schools do a better job of recognizing student mental health issues and providing treatment when necessary.

Jimenez said she moved to Columbia in 1971 and has worked as a teacher and counselor for Columbia Public Schools. She said she was “very excited and encouraged” about recent programs that support mental health issues in children.

She asked the council to support allowing therapists to meet with students at schools and for more resources to be allocated for summer programs.

Pack Matthews, a representative of Faith Voices, discussed race and white privilege in Columbia. Several residents have spoken about race at recent council meetings, and Matthews said whites had a responsibility to address racial issues.

He called the black student protesters who blocked MU president Tim Wolfe’s car “courageous,” and said the white bystanders who tried to stop the protesters were examples of white privilege. He also spoke about “a social system that works well for (only) a few of us.”

Grace Vega responded to recommendations made by the Community Violence Task Force regarding community policing, and her comments also touched on race.

Vega said she was “thrilled” to learn about the task force. While she voiced support for “community policing,” Vega said she was worried it wouldn’t be backed up by real change. She said a community policing program had been tried in Columbia in the 1990s, but that it floundered amid lack of support from the mayor and the council.

She asked the council several questions about how the concept of community policing was being implemented in Columbia.

Dick Parker spoke about the city's clean power plan. Referencing statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency, Parker spoke of the need for clean, renewable energy.

He was complimentary about the city's efforts to reduce carbon dioxide; Columbia's Municipal Power Plant recently stopped burning coal. However, Parker was pessimistic about Columbia's ability to meet EPA goals. He said future building projects should be more energy efficient, which could help save money over time.

CLOSED MEETING

At 5 p.m. the council met for a closed session, before its main meeting at 7 p.m.

Supervising editors are Scott Swafford and Will Schmitt.