

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
HELD OCTOBER 7, 2019**

Regular Meeting - Transact Routine Business

Mayor Barnhart called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with roll call as follows:

PRESENT: Mayor Barnhart
COUNCIL: Karper, Shepard, Fisher, Lovering, Piper and Robinson
ABSENT: None.

ROLL CALL

Also present were City Manager Nicosia, City Clerk Staland, City Attorney Breck, Sergeant Murphy and City Planner Mulcahy.

Pledge of Allegiance

PLEDGE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mayor Barnhart requested a motion to approve the agenda. Councilman Fisher moved to approve the agenda, second by Councilman Piper, and the motion carried unanimously.

**AGENDA
APPROVAL**

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilman Lovering moved to approve the consent agenda noting that all claims appeared to be in order, second by Councilman Karper. Motion carried with Council voting as follows: YES: Karper, Shepard, Fisher, Lovering, Piper, Robinson and Barnhart NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

**CONSENT
AGENDA
APPROVAL**

- A. Approval of Claims - \$82,688.96 October 7, 2019
- B. Approval of Payroll Claims - \$ 82,028.46 - September 20, 2019
- C. Approval of Payroll Claims - \$111,689.52 - October 4, 2019
- D. Approval of Payroll Quarterlies - \$21,731.00 - October 4, 2019
- E. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes - September 16, 2019
- F. Approval of 19-20FY City Manager's contract and authorize Mayor and Manager to sign.
- G. Approve Task Order #4 HDR-WWTP Sludge Pump and OIT at the WWTP

VISITOR/PUBLIC COMMENT: (Items not on agenda)

None.

**VISITOR/PUBLIC
COMMENT**

APPOINTMENTS:

A. City Solid Waste Board Appointment - Susan Nicosia, 3-year term ending December 31, 2022.

Councilor Shepard motioned to appoint City Manager Nicosia to the Solid Waste Board, second by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried unanimously.

**APPOINTMENTS-
Nicosia - Solid
Waste Board**

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Mayor Barnhart read the PUBLIC HEARINGS/NOTICES:

Public Hearing – City Council October 7th:

**PUBLIC
HEARINGS-
Benches**

The Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board held a public hearing for the following items at their regular meeting on Tuesday, September 10, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on October 7, 2019 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

Request for a Planned Unit Development and Major Subdivision in the Columbia Falls Planning Jurisdiction:

Prairie Dog Development, LLC is requesting approval of a Planned Unit Development and a mixed-use Major Subdivision consisting of single family residential and resort cabins. The 55.44 acre property is located at 7073 US Highway 2, Columbia Falls and is described as Tract 3, COS 20092 in Section 16, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Mayor Barnhart requested the staff report presentations.

City Planner Mulcahy gave a brief overview of the process, requirements and regulations for subdivision preliminary plat approval. Mulcahy noted that the Council is holding one hearing for both the PUD and preliminary plat requests and that he would be presenting the staff reports, CPUD-19-01 and CPP-19-02, at the same time.

Mulcahy first reviewed the PUD report in detail noting that the applicant is requesting a PUD due to the 30 rental cabins on over 4 acres on Lot 1. Mulcahy reported that the City PUD regulations require 30% of open space, the applicant is a couple acres short but have a plan to adjust lots where needed to come into compliance. The underlying zone is CR3 which is Urban Residential. Mulcahy reported that the city cannot require a developer to connect to city utilities if they are more than 500 feet away from the service lines, as is the case with this project. The applicant will develop their own community water and septic systems on site per the proposal. Mulcahy said that the applicant will have to prove to DNRC and DEQ that they can comply with specific regulations and obtain permits from those agencies before receiving final plat. Mulcahy noted that the application does comply with the Growth Policy as the map shows this area as Urban Residential Designation. At the September 10, 2019 Planning Board meeting the Board decided that the rental cabins were too close to the wetlands and suggested a 25' setback from the wetlands. They also amended finding #7 to include the 25' setback within the area. The Planning Board recommended approval of the PUD with the 11 conditions as amended. They amended those conditions to reflect the exception of trees required to be disturbed for road and utility construction in condition #6. Condition #7 c. was amended to read – All of the non-motorized trail system shall be no less than 5' width and alignments approved by City

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Staff prior to Final Plat. They elected to add condition #11 - A 25' setback is required from all delineated wetlands for buildings, parking lots, and permanent structures except primary access roads. The PUD complies with the review criteria of the City Zoning Ordinance.

Mulcahy reported receipt of a letter from Fish, Wildlife and Parks wildlife biologist Jessy Coltrane indicating that she feels there will be impacts to wildlife habitat. She included some recommendations which the Planning Board approved and included in condition #28. The road crossings through the wetlands will require the applicant to go through the Corps of Engineers for permit approval. The Planning Board also added condition #29 requiring that all cut and fill areas be contained within road rights of ways or easements. The applicant would be generating approximately 15 students from the 48 homes, not to include the cabin rentals. The PUD has 11 conditions as revised by the Planning Board and the preliminary plat has 29 conditions as amended by the Planning Board.

Mayor Barnhart asked for a report from the applicant. Dave DeGrandpre with Land Solutions LLC, said he is representing Jim McIntyre/Prairie Dog Development, said this is the first step in the preliminary plat process. We are trying to develop housing for the working class. Mr. DeGrandpre said there is significant concern with the wetlands on approximately 5 acres; the US Army Corp of Engineers is in charge of wetlands, when you disturb a wetland you have to create wetlands on site or contribute to a wetland bank. DeGrandpre stated there is an existing road on site and would need to increase it in size along with culverts where needed. DeGrandpre said they do not have a problem with the 25' setbacks. The project has sufficient police and fire protection and does comply with the city zoning requirements. At the Planning Board meeting there was concern over the rental cabins, there will be an onsite manager to manage the cabins. Mr. DeGrandpre said there will be a buffer between the highway and the cabins and subdivision.

Mayor Barnhart asked Council if they had questions for the applicant. Councilman Shepard asked if you are still planning the same number of cabins with the 25' setbacks. Mr. DeGrandpre said those plans are not finalized yet. Councilman Karper asked the applicant if they have addressed the 30% open space requirement. Mr. McIntyre said yes, we have increased two common areas and some of the lots were made smaller to comply with the 30% common area.

Councilor Robinson inquired about the culverts and who is responsible for maintaining them to be sure they don't get backed up. DeGrandpre said the homeowner's association will be responsible for road and culvert maintenance. Mayor Barnhart inquired if MDOT said they would maintain Rogers Road. Mr. DeGrandpre said the county will maintain Rogers Rd. Mayor Barnhart asked if the ability to not have the guest cabins would kill the subdivision. DeGrandpre said it is what we are asking for but he would have

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to discuss it further with his client.

Mayor Barnhart said there have been letters received and presented to council for review.

Mayor Barnhart said he did receive a phone call and explained to the caller that he could not discuss this evening's hearing and it would not affect how he would run the meeting. Councilor Robinson said she had a short conversation with one of the opponents and the conversation will not interfere with her ability to make her decision tonight. Councilman Shepard said he received 7 phone calls, and anything that was stated to him will not interfere with his discussion. Councilman Karper said he had a phone call and he told the caller he could not discuss this topic and she understood. Councilman Lovering and Councilman Fisher said they too had conversations similar to Councilman Karper's. Mayor Barnhart explained to those in attendance that council is not allowed to have ex parte communications prior to this type of hearing as the proceeding is quasi-judicial.

Mayor Barnhart opened the public hearing for public comment at 7:53 p.m.

Courtney Stone, resides at 225 Rogers Rd. said she opposes the development for several reasons. She believes the 25' setback from the wetlands is not enough. The letter from Fish, Wildlife and Parks typically recommends a 100' of vegetation, plus 30' additional for building setback. Ms. Stone has concern for public safety on Rogers Rd. and Hwy 2. Stone believes the 30% open space is really non developmental land rather than open space. She would ask for 8' wide paths, a traffic light at Hwy 2, preserve tree corridors and lower density.

Glen Wehe, resides at 267 Rogers Rd. Mr. Wehe said he is opposed to the development and went on to read a story he had written.

Larry Williams, resides at 62 Crescent Dr. said he has concerns about the wetlands. In environmental sense those wetlands are dependent on water tables and soils. He appreciates the fact that growth is necessary. Mr. Williams said we passed over the septic system which is a significant concern of his.

Lucy Rogers Yeats, lives at 315 Shooting Star Ln. said she compares this project to the Half Moon Meadow Homes, which is the same developer. Those are one acre lots with a starting price of \$380,000. The other term used was the high-quality wetlands, the developer can do cash in lieu and take the money and go somewhere else. Ms. Yeats also compared this project to Columbia Range which left the wetlands untouched. This project really has no access if they do not touch the wetlands. 4 out of 6 people on the Planning Board expressed concern about the setbacks and came up with a 25' setback that she

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believes should be 125' setbacks. In 2006 land owners were lined up to develop their property along the highway corridor, but they would have to have city services brought across the river. Ms. Yeats said the decision you make this evening will affect the remainder of development along the highway corridor.

Daniel Seliger, resides at 439 Rogers Rd., said he is opposed to the development. Mr. Seliger said when surrounding wells go dry in the area who will be responsible? In the past there was an irrigation pivot installed near his property that drew the wells down.

Shirley Rogers Folkwein, lives at 285 Shooting Star Dr., said she is confused that at the Planning Board meeting staff referred to the Growth Policy survey and reported that the results show that people want the city to grow to the east. There were 45% respondents in favor of expanding to the west and only 18% in favor of expanding to the east. She said there will be 3 disturbed wetlands. Ms. Folkwein said she spoke with the senior project manager for the COE for this area; they prefer cash in lieu of mitigation and we may not see the benefit. After speaking with DEQ, they reported no authority over wetlands protection. They only have control over the septic system. Fish, Wildlife and Parks require 125' setback to which she believes to be better than 25' which the Planning Board agreed to. Hwy 206 is never mentioned in the application along with Rogers Rd. access onto Hwy 206. Her recommendation is to table the project and the proposal so the findings of facts can be corrected.

Pete Skibsrud, resides at 73 Willow Glen Rd. said he came to the valley in 1973. He is disturbed to see the valley sold off to the highest bidder. Mr. Skibsrud asked council to please take a second look at the proposed project.

Jamie Belt, resides at 189 Red Bridge Rd., said this project will set a major precedent for growth in that area. How will the cabins be regulated, what is to ensure there are not additional vacation rentals within the subdivision? Why is the density being considered when in other areas it is 1 acre per septic? Also the 750 trips per day is much more than it is now. We appreciate the open space which will be altered and does not continue to be used for wildlife. Altering the wetland will affect the river. Ms. Belt said her request would be the cabins nonexistent, lower density, proper setbacks on property lines, bike path to the bridge and a traffic light.

Debra Cox, lives at 120 Kelly Rd., said she agrees there will be traffic problems and the open space. Ms. Cox said this project may increase property values which will increase her taxes. She would like to see 5 acre tracts per housing unit. At the Planning Board meeting they said there would be 35' max height of the homes, which to her seems too high. Ms. Cox believes the density is too

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much for that area and asks council to please listen to community member concerns.

Lorinda Seliger, resides at 439 Rogers Rd. said her parents have lived on their property since 1950 and they will be the ones to see the development as it will be right in front of their property as well as hers. Ms. Seliger asked Council to please think about this development, and take our thoughts into consideration.

Becky Williams, lives at 62 Crescent Dr. said she would like to encourage Council to consider this sort of subdivision. Ms. Williams said she agrees with the residents that the 25' setback is not enough. She believes the common area will be a convenience to the developer and not for natural vegetation. Mrs. Williams would like to see all parties work together on such a development.

Dave Yeats, resides at 315 Shooting Star Dr., said he is opposed to the development and especially opposed to the rental cabins. Mr. Yeats said if the community could work together we could move river road to the west side of the wetland which would get the road off the bridge. Mr. Yeats also believes a traffic light will be needed near the subdivision entrance. He would like to see the wetlands left alone.

Ruth Clawson, resides at 355 Rogers Rd. said a concern she has is the salt base deicer put on the access road may affect the wetland. She stated they have been informed that steps were taken to evaluate the ground water flow direction of the shallow aquifer, which she understands to be southwestern flow which would be toward her home. She does not know how this may affect neighboring homes.

Mayor Barnhart closed the Public Hearing at 9:05 pm. Mayor suggested a 5 minute break.

Mayor Barnhart asked the applicant if they had any additional information to present at this time. Dave DeGrandpre said in regard to the high ground water concern, it is the wetlands which are just less than 5 acres and contained in the common area. The applicant is proposing to fill .29 acres. The Corp of Engineers has specific requirements and they want the developer to contribute to their wetlands. The water supply will be two wells that are in the common area. The road access is regulated by MDOT and they will determine if there is need for a traffic light. The septic is set up by DEQ requirements which are a rigorous process. This project does meet many city requirements and goals. Workforce housing is normal sized lots for people working in the valley.

Councilman Piper asked for clarification on how we got from CR3 zoning to a

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PUD. City Planner Mulcahy said we can purpose a PUD overlay that essentially flexes our zoning. In Columbia Falls all of our residential areas allow short term rentals with a Conditional Use Permit. They are looking to place up to 30 rental cabins on a single tract.

Councilman Fisher motioned to approve Staff Report CPUD-19-01 as amended by the Planning Board as findings of fact, second by Councilor Robinson.

Councilman Shepard said this area is close to the river and the septic system is a concern. Mayor said he concurs with Shepard; we are in a sensitive area. Mayor Barnhart said he has been in the excavating business for 40 years and has extensive experience in septic systems. If we allow more septic systems that close to the river we may regret it in the end. On another note if we did extend city services across the river, the cost will go up for the developers but it will allow us to clean up some of the properties getting them off septic and on city service. Councilor Robinson said she concurs with Mayor Barnhart and she would like to see city service extended to protect the environment.

Councilman Karper said he has an issue with the 30 rental cabins. The 25' setback seems inadequate and he does not agree with everything Fish, Wildlife and Parks suggests. Karper believes the rental cabins to be a planned commercial enterprise in a residential area. Karper stated that the rental cabins are not consistent with the residential area. Councilman Piper concurs with Karper on the rental cabins. Councilman Shepard said he inquired and Bozeman does require a 25' setback from the water to the sidewalk. Shepard asked about the letter from FWP. Mulcahy said Jesse Coltrane has been in that position for approximately 4 years and this is a fairly common comment letter. Fisher said if FWP said the 100' setback would be more applicable then he would like to have that discussion. Lovering said the rental cabin is a concern for her and where is the line drawn, does this mean other developments can do the same. Mayor Barnhart agreed it is a commercial venture. Karper asked if the purpose of the PUD is to allow the 30 cabins. Mulcahy said that is correct.

Councilor Robinson said she has a hard time with residents having to drive past the rental cabins to the get to the subdivision.

Barnhart said with the concerns on winter weather and roads not being maintained, it is the residents' choice to live there.

Shepard said it is amazing what two large wells could do to a shallow well. Mulcahy said these types of wells are not going into the aquifer. They are pulling out of deep artesian aquifer. DNRC will look at the wells and if it is an impact than that would be an issue. DEQ will be looking at storm water and water systems.

Karper said he does not believe 30 cabins will help the general health and welfare of the area as stated on Finding #5. He also believes the ingress and

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egress of roads onto highways will be an issue for the rental facility.

Mayor Barnhart said he would like to address Finding #2, as it states the defined area is fully served by all municipal services and we do not supply city services to the area.

Mayor Barnhart motioned to amend Finding #2 as the cabins are not fully served by municipal services. The amendment adds: This proposal does not comply with this section as it is not fully serviced by municipal services. Motion seconded by Councilman Fisher, with council voting as follows: AYES: Fisher, Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Karper motioned to amend finding #11, that a commercial enterprise of 30 rental cabins is not suited for the wetlands or residential area. Karper's amendment to Finding #11 bullet #2 to read - The district contains both residential, commercial and heavy industry uses however we do not want to expand commercial use to this property especially in the wetlands area. Second by Councilman Shepard, with council voting as follows. AYES: Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Fisher motioned to remove the last sentence in finding #7, plus add a sentence to the finding: 7.3 units per acre appears too dense/crowded for this area. Second by Councilor Lovering with Council voting as follows. AYES: Lovering Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, Karper and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Fisher motioned to strike the current text in Finding #8 and add 30 units on 4.1 acres does not avoid an undue concentration of people in the area adjacent to the wetlands Second by Councilor Lovering, with council voting as follows. AYES: Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, Karper, Lovering and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Fisher withdraws his initial motion on the findings of fact, second by Councilor Robinson. Councilman Fisher made motion to approve the amended Staff Report CPUD-19-01 as findings of fact, second by Councilor Robinson with council voting as follows. AYES: Shepard, Fisher, Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Karper motioned to deny the request of the PUD zoning overlay based on the amended findings of fact, second by Councilman Shepard with council voting as follows. AYES: Fisher, Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

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Councilman Fisher motioned to approve the amended Staff Report CPP-19-02 as findings of fact second by Councilman Shepard.

Councilman Karper asked City Planner if the access roads will be in the same place. Mulcahy said that is correct. Karper asked on condition #28 how that will be mandated. Mulcahy said it would be part of the CCR's.

AYES: Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher and Barnhart.
NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Councilman Piper moved to approve the Preliminary Plat, second by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. AYES: Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard, Fisher, Karper and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

Mayor Barnhart thanked all of the citizens for their attendance.

Mayor Barnhart read the following: Notice of Public Hearings - Planning Board October 15th and City Council October 21st The Columbia Falls City-County Planning Board will hold a public hearing for the following items at their regular meeting on Tuesday, October 15, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers of City Hall, 130 6th Street West, Columbia Falls, Montana. The Columbia Falls City Council will hold a subsequent hearing on October 21, 2019 starting at 7:00 p.m. in the same location.

Conditional Use Permit Application Request: A request by Randy and Debbie Jones for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to build a 12-unit condominium complex on Lot 170 in the Hilltop Homes Subdivision. The subject lot is zoned CRA-1 (Multi-Family Residential) by the Columbia Falls Zoning Code. The CRA-1 zoning designation requires a CUP to construct a three-plex or greater within the zoning district. The applicants previously received a CUP for multi-family condos on neighboring lots within the subdivision and the proposed structure will resemble the existing structures. The property is addressed as 3 Diane Road and described as Lot 170 of the Hilltop Homes subdivision in Section 18, Township 30 North, Range 22 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Request to Amend the Highline Planned Unit Development in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

The Highline Apartments LLC is requesting an amendment to the approved Planned Unit Development overlay that permitted the 207 unit apartment project located at 405 Bills Lane in Columbia Falls. The property is described as Lots 3 and 4 of Williams Estates in Section 16, Township 20 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County. The amendments include moving building E into Phase 2 and increasing the size of the wall sign for the project.

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Request for a Zone Change in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

Weyerhaeuser NR Company, owners of the subject land, request to amend the zoning district map for property in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction. The property in question is currently zoned CI-1 (Light Industrial) and is the location of the former Plum Creek/Weyerhaeuser corporate office, more commonly known as “the Cedar Palace,” and data center along with adjacent parcels. The applicants propose to change the zoning to CB-2 (General Business) to allow the use of the former Corporate Offices to be used for a Medical Office facility. The 23.8 acre property is addressed as 500 12th Avenue West in Columbia Falls and is described in detail on the published legal notice (included in Council packet).

Persons may testify at the hearing or submit written comments prior to the meeting. Written comment may be sent to Columbia Falls City Hall, Attention: Barb Staaland, City Clerk, 130 6th Street West, Room A, Columbia Falls, MT 59912. For more information call Eric Mulcahy, Columbia Falls City Planner at 755-6481.

**UNFINISHED
BUSINESS**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS:

A. Resolution #1807 - A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Falls, Montana Adopting a Revised Fee Schedule for Planning and Zoning.

**RESOLUTION
#1807-Updating
Planning Fees**

City Manager Nicosia said staff is recommending the new fees go into effect January 1, 2020 so the City can publish the new fees and anyone currently considering an application can get it in before the new fees go into effect. Nicosia also noted the addition of the after the fact permit fee of \$500 for administrative conditional use permits.

Councilman Fisher motioned to adopt Resolution #1807, second by Councilman Karper, with council voting as follows. AYES: Fisher, Karper, Lovering, Piper, Robinson, Shepard and Barnhart. NOES: None. ABSENT: None.

REPORTS/BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

**REPORTS FROM
MAYOR AND
COUNCIL**

Councilman Piper said on 3rd Ave WN looks like they are moving and there is junk stacked around the fire hydrant.

Councilman Karper said the city crew did a good job on fixing the drywell by Ruder Elementary.

Councilman Shepard said he is pleased with this evenings meeting.

Councilman Lovering said 13th St is so much nicer to drive on. Lovering also

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thanked the city for allowing the homecoming parade.

Mayor Barnhart said, speaking on behalf of the council, we do care about Columbia Falls and the greater jurisdictional area. Mayor appreciates the councils work.

CITY MANAGER:

Nicosia said she would like to schedule a workshop to discuss the zoning jurisdiction as well as the extension of services plan.

Nicosia reminded council of the Resort Tax Advisory Committee meeting on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

Nicosia said the Montana League of cities and towns conference was beneficial.

Nicosia reported that she met with Erin Quinta and her conservation group at the High School and they are willing to partner with the City on our bike share program.

Nicosia reported that the Police Dept. will be selling the unclaimed lost property and then the City will update our policy.

The committee selected Morison and Maierle for the new well project. Council will see a contract in the near future.

**CITY MANAGER
REPORT**

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT:

City Attorney Breck said they received an unacceptable amount to settle the Badger case.

Attorney Breck stated that this evenings meeting was done very well and he was pleased with the way Council handled it and addressed each of the issues.

**REPORT FROM
CITY ATTORNEY**

POLICE CHIEF REPORT:

Sergeant Murphy said the City has been hit pretty hard on recent crime that exceeded \$10,000 damage to property. With the help from citizens and good police work we have charged juveniles and will look for reimbursements.

OTHER REPORTS

INFORMATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE - List available for Review

CORRESPONDENCE

ADJOURN: Upon motion duly made by Councilor Lovering and seconded by Councilor Shepard the meeting adjourned at 10:48 p.m.

ADJOURN

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

APPROVED BY COUNCIL ACTION: October 21, 2019