



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

City Council

Monday, January 4, 2021
6:00 PM

Pre-Council

Council Chamber
City Hall
701 East Broadway

I. CALL TO ORDER

The City Council met on January 4, 2021 at approximately 6:03 p.m. in the Council Chamber of City Hall, 701 E. Broadway, Columbia, Missouri.

Council Members Treece (arrived at approximately 6:04 p.m.), Fowler, Trapp, Skala, Pitzer, and Peters were present.

Present: 6 - Trapp, Peters, Treece, Skala, Pitzer, and Fowler

Absent: 1 - Thomas

CoMo Website Redesign

Attachments: [CoMo Website Redesign Presentation](#)
[City of Columbia Website Survey Final Findings](#)

Steve Sapp, Director Community Relations, thanked the Council for taking the time to listen to the transformation of the city's website. He recognized the numerous staff that helped with the project.

Mr. Sapp discussed the background of the web presence of the City of Columbia. It was kind of a wild west back then, since each department was on their own to develop their webpage. In 2002, an e-gov coordinator, Sam Shelby, was hired. Mr. Shelby put together some structure for the website. The last significant redesign was in 2013, for functionality the city website should be redesigned every 2-3 years. It is a bulky site due to the large amount of pages, which can affect the latency of the website. The City of Columbia currently maintains 17 different sites, 25 different WordPress environments, and 41 different URLs.

Mr. Sapp overviewed the process of the website redesign. In the summer of 2019, Mr. Glascock asked Community Relations and IT to look at various internal and external options. There were some informal meetings, and they realized from a cost perspective that the starting point would not take them to the finished product. After internal discussions, Community Relations and IT decided to collaborate to do this project internally. The Project Management Office outlined goals and timeframes for the website redesign.

Mr. Sapp presented the goals of the redesign. Primarily, the website redesign needed to be customer focused. That meant easy to use navigations, enhanced search, a decreased number of clicks, and provides access to key services 24/7. The website needed to maintain the City's branded identity, so users know that they are on the City website and the pages are cohesive. Community Relations is working on a visual branding guide that will be presented in the near future. They wanted to deepen transparency to increase confidence and trust. The last goal was to display information

consistently across departments. CIP Projects have adequate information and look the same. The solution is to bring all of those projects into a central database.

Mr. Sapp stated that they researched many analytics for design and content. They implemented peer and industry best practices. One of the bigger parts of the redesign was to make the website mobile responsive, since there is not much mobile flexibility currently. The website will be fully accessible. The redesign will be adaptable and flexible for continual updates.

Mr. Sapp stated that the ETC institute surveyed 465 residents, which provided staff with information about what local residents use the website for and where there were shortfalls with the current website.

Mr. Sapp presented the comparison of the transition of design. There has not been many changes to the functionality yet. He introduced Christian DeVerger, Web Content Editor, to do a brief demo of the website.

Christain DeVerger showed a demo of the new website and explained the different elements that were used. The core team researched 50-100 municipalities for the design elements.

Mr. Trapp mentioned that the twitter feed was the incorrect city. Mr. DeVerger responded that he will get that fixed.

Mr. DeVerger explained that for the department pages, the core team reviewed all of the information. They wanted to reduce the number of total pages, and restructure the information to make more sense. About 40% of pages were reduced with the restructure without removing any crucial information for the public.

Mr. DeVerger presented the mobile version of the website. He mentioned that approximately 60% of the website traffic comes through mobile devices. There was a focus on navigation by reducing the number of clicks by getting people to what they're looking for more quickly and efficiently.

Council Member Peters asked if the website was built out or not. Mr. DeVerger answered that the content is being moved into the system, which is about 75% completed. Ms. Peters asked when the website is planned to be live. Mr. DeVerger said that it will be ready in the summer of this year. Ms. Peters asked if there people have beta tested the website. Mr. DeVerger answered that some people in the survey will have the opportunity to beta test the new website, their feedback will be incorporated into the rollout. Ms. Peters stated that she would like to be included in the beta test, since she can't find things quickly on the website. She is looking forward to the new website.

Council Member Trapp asked if this would deal with the latency issues, he received many complaints on that and is a source of his frustration. Mr. DeVerger said he did not have the expertise to answer on the infrastructure, but the goal for reducing the total amount of content should make things load quicker. Sam Shelby, Systems Analyst, mentioned that a lot of the latency issues lately were due to the amount of traffic on the website. Especially for the COVID-19 information hub, they have tried to do things on the back end to improve the latency issues. The new website should be even better and should address those issues. The traffic on the website is hard to prepare for when it's all at once. Mr. Trapp asked if it is architecture and server power, and if there are any plans to improve the server power. Mr. Shelby said that is correct. IT has done some to correct for the server power. A lot of the issues have been corrected that occurred in the early onset

of COVID. The new website is built on a newer technology so those problems should be addressed. Mr. Trapp appreciated staff dealing with a big issue with existing resources.

Council Member Skala liked that the data is accessible, and reducing the sheer bulk of it. He is interested in beta testing the website, especially to test refining the search. At first blush the website looks terrific, and it is refreshing. He thought it looked very good, and would like to look more into the functions of the website.

Council Member Fowler asked how the Council could do to be helpful to staff. Mr. DeVerger responded that a big emphasis area of the redesign has been trying to implement a better data management system. The team has looked at different options. The goal to merge as many as systems into a portal that would automatically populate the reports. The biggest challenge is getting all of the technology connected. He does not know the solution for that yet. The goal is to get the new website done first, and then implement a data portal. It would be difficult to both at the same time. Ms. Fowler suggested reaching out to neighborhood associations as part of the beta testing group.

Council Member Pitzer asked about the industry standard, and once it's launched will there be more updates. Mr. DeVerger said that normally these updates are on a rolling cycle. Since it has been so long, the initial push has taken a lot more effort and energy than in the future. There is less individual material to go through. After this initial push, he would like to create a schedule for IT and Community Relations to maintain the content. This would allow for less work to be done on the back-end before the next redesign. He thinks that they should continually explore the technology for the city to stay up to date.

Council Member Pitzer asked if there was anything that was not able to be accomplished since it was done by internal resources rather than external. Mr. DeVerger stated that he thought the website is comparable or better than what the vendors showed them. The data portal has been the most challenging by trying to integrate it all in one place. He believes they will be able to accomplish it, just not all at the same time.

Mayor Treece said that he loved the look of the website and wanted to know who is responsible for editing the department specific pages. Mr. DeVerger answered that he reaches out to each department for their internal expertise, and then edits the material. Mayor Treece liked the splash page for Missouri's fourth largest city and is a professional look. He encouraged them to continue using that theme throughout the department specific pages, and reference Columbia, MO to avoid any potential confusion. He thought it was a great improvement.

MyCoMo App Overview

Attachments: [MyCOMO App Presentation](#)
[MyCOMO App Demo](#)

Mr. Sapp continued the customer focus theme for the night. The MyCOMO App is an app that will be able to consolidate 14-15 city applications. This would create a citizen portal so they can see the status of issues that they report. Mayor Treece asked about the accessibility of the transparency and financial tracking portals. Mr. Sapp answered that they will be accessible on both the new website and app to help maintain transparency.

Stephanie Brown, Assistant Director of Community Relations, introduced the proposed MyCOMO App. It is a goal to enhance the customer experience. This includes all possible avenues to receive information, and making city services accessible.

The MyCOMO App would encumber the smaller apps, so all information will be in one

place. Citizens can receive push notifications for events. There is a way to report issues throughout the app, and it will input the issue into the city's tracking system. The app will also connect to the utility billing website. It does integrate with the citizen's self service portal, where businesses can request business licenses and permits. Citizens can view local events and chat with a customer service representative.

Mayor Treece asked if the app would consolidate all of the complaint functions into one area. Ms. Brown responded that yes, citizens can choose any of those options, and those options can be updated as they see trends.

Ms. Brown showed a demo of the app to show the functionality.

Ms. Brown covered the future goals of the app. The app will be made available for all phones. One app to house all City apps and services, so all of the information is one place. Integration with all of the other City systems, it completely integrates with Tyler311 which is the current customer relationship center. In the near future when the public facing side of Tyler311, it will be able to integrate with the app.

It is expected that the app will be ready to be completed by the end of March. Before the app is marketed, there will be a beta test group to provide feedback.

Ms. Brown thanked the staff team.

Mr. Skala said the app looked great, and emphasized the integration of the systems. He assumed that the same information would be able to be reviewed on their phone or computer. Ms. Brown said that this will feed directly into the system and will go directly to the department.

Ms. Peters asked how the restaurants and places to stay are chosen. Ms. Brown explained that this information comes directly from the CVB.

Mr. Pitzer asked about one of the future goals being the incorporation of the other City apps. Ms. Brown answered that they should all be encompassed in the app, and they will review that no functionality is lost. Mr. Pitzer asked when the apps will be taken down after going live. Ms. Brown said they will sunset close to after the new app goes live so it is not drawn out. Mr. Pitzer asked if the website redesign will be coordinated. Ms. Brown answered that the app will be updated to mirror the website, but it may be ready sooner than the website.

Mayor Treece asked if there was anything else they needed to be successful. Ms. Brown said that they would like Council to download the app to provide feedback.

Mr. Treece assumed that there will be similar metrics from the app, so they can understand the volume or percentage of reports. Ms. Brown said that they will be able to track how the information is reported.

II. ALL OTHER ITEMS COUNCIL MAY WISH TO DISCUSS

Mr. Glascock thanked Community Relations and IT staff. A lot of department heads like their own pages so pulling all of this information together took a lot of work, which is why it would have cost \$300,000 for someone external. Mayor Treece thought having a consistent identity is important and reflects where the city should be for the size. Mr. Skala liked the integration. Mr. Glascock mentioned it all builds off of the City of Columbia logo.

Mayor Treece said it was nice seeing Steve Sapp pushing it to the end. Mr. Sapp said all of his accomplishments come from a team. It has been fun in a lot of fun, but has been a struggle also. The beta test group will be broad before the full launch. He mentioned that the website team is a thin bench, and may need to ask for future help to fulfill the goals of the website redesign and app.

Mayor Treece thanked Mr. Sapp. IT has helped us over the past 10 months, and he appreciates them as well as the other city workers that have carried on.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:48 p.m.