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COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OWEN BROWN REPRESENTATIVE ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS FOR FY2025

Michael Golibersuch, Owen Brown Columbia Council Representative

Fiscal year 2025 (FY25) was another successful year for Columbia Association (CA). CA continues to help make Columbia an excellent place to live, have fun, and work. There are several topics from the past FY worth highlighting. As you read this, please keep in mind this is a report on FY25 which ran from May 2024 through April 2025. There are great things happening in CA since April 2025 that are not covered here.

Strategic Plan

This past year, the Board of Directors approved a new five-year strategic plan. The plan maintains the same mission for CA: *“Engage our diverse community, cultivate a unique sense of place and enhance quality of life.”* Meanwhile, it made a slight change to the vision statement which is now *“A Columbia that is intentionally diverse, committed to wellness, sustainable, beautiful, connected and resilient.”* The plan provides a flexible framework based around a matrix of four “Focus Areas” and five “Strategic Emphasis Areas.” This framework will guide the Board’s annual objectives and staff initiatives for the next several years. To read more about the plan, “Focus Areas,” and “Strategic Emphasis Areas,” visit CA’s website online at <https://columbiaassociation.org/governance/strategic-plan/fy25/>.

Finances

CA remains in sound financial health. CA beat the FY25 projected budget by \$6.9 million with a total increase in net assets of \$10.8 million. This is primarily the result of lower than budgeted expenses, savings on IT initiatives (such as the new CRM software the community now uses to manage membership accounts and access facilities) and delays in completing planned capital projects. Higher than expected interest rates and a 4% higher membership revenue also contributed to the favorable results with membership revenue up about 10% over the last year. These results reflect disciplined financial management and indicate long-term stability, but they do not mean CA had extra cash to spend. In fact, CA ended FY25 with a cash deficit of about \$2.6 million because it spent more cash on projects and reserves than

it brought in during the year, even while its overall financial position improved. The detailed end of year financial statement for CA can be found online at <https://columbiaassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/ca-fy25-q4-financial-report.pdf>.

The Board of Directors is continuing to build a Cash Reserve and set aside \$5 million for that purpose in FY25. This Cash Reserve was initiated in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and should help insulate CA from future shocks. Our local economy is likely to be affected by changes in federal employment and state budget cuts. Those issues may already be having negative impacts on membership growth. CA is in a strong financial position to address these challenges.

Capital Projects

CA completed many capital projects in FY25 including a major renovation of the Art Center in Long Reach Village Center. The Art Center provides our community access to arts education, exhibition space, and cultural programming. If arts and crafts are an interest of yours, I recommend checking out the newly renovated facility. CA also completed a major renovation of the Supreme Sports Club weight room, greatly expanding the space and adding equipment. It is a welcome improvement over the previous smaller space. I am there, fighting middle age, several times a week – please say hello if you see me. Other completed capital projects include millions in pathway and bridge projects, replacements for CA's fleet of vehicles and equipment, and energy retrofits as part of CA's "going green" initiative. Projects you may have noticed in Owen Brown include the restoration of one of the fishing piers at Lake Elkhorn, new pathway bridges near Rustling Leaf, a renovated tot lot near Windbell Way, and a new sway bench near Brush Run.

Operations

CA continues to provide its wide array of services throughout FY25 including operations of its three gyms, outdoor pools, tennis clubs, sports park, ice rink, Art Center, and indoor swim center. CA also continues to manage 3,600 acres of open space – including mowing, trash pickup, snow removal, tree pruning, storm damage cleanup, lake maintenance, landscaping, invasive species control, and watershed management – which is often taken for granted but is a large effort. And CA continued to provide an abundance of programming including Festive Fridays during the winter and Lakefront Live during the summer.

Of note, FY25 was arguably the first back-to-"normal" year for outdoor pools since the pandemic. CA traditionally has a "pipeline" of lifeguards to staff the outdoor pools with new employees acting as junior lifeguards who, after a few summers, mature into managers. Covid disrupted that pipeline of talent causing staffing difficulties – and associated pool closures - even after the peak of the pandemic. But CA is hopeful that things have returned to a steady state and, while staffing is still a challenge, the worst of the lifeguard shortage is behind us.

Staff

CA welcomed two new members of its senior leadership team in FY25: CEO and President Shawn MacInnes and Treasurer Stephanie Nestor. They have both gotten up to speed quickly and are contributing to our community. The flip side of this, of course, is staff departures. Interim CEO and President

Dennis Matthey (who spent five decades with CA), Treasurer Lynn Schwartz, and CFO Susan Krabbe all departed the organization (a new CFO has joined in FY26). All three are missed and were great assets to our community.

This continuing trend of turnover in senior staff remains, in my view, one of CA's biggest challenges. New personnel bring innovative ideas and approaches, challenging the status quo and potentially leading to improved performance. However, changes at the top often mean some loss of institutional knowledge, temporary dips in productivity, and morale challenges.

I believe supporting staff morale and retention should be a high priority for the Board, and the entire community can play a role by recognizing the value of CA staff and contributing to a positive environment. Unfortunately, board meetings and many public engagements too often take on a negative tone driven by a small number of participants whose hostility toward staff is out of proportion to any concern and detached from the day-to-day reality of the staff's professionalism and life in Columbia. Columbia is widely regarded as one of the best places to live in the country and that quality of life owes much to CA staff. The CA Staff work hard every day to provide the best service possible to the community. Their enthusiasm and positivity are a reflection of the organization's commitment to serving Columbia. Let's all strive for the same optimistic view of our community and each other.
