

Monthly Columbia Association (CA) Update Report for Hickory Ridge

Hickory Ridge's Columbia Council Representative: Micajah McGarity

Month: October 2026

Disclaimer: Please note that the views and commentary expressed in this report are my own.

Here is a summary of the latest governance updates, planning efforts, and upcoming activities from the Columbia Association to keep the Hickory Ridge community informed.

1. Governance & Leadership Updates

● **Ted Bauer Elected to the CA Board:** Last month, the Members of the Columbia Association met to consider the election of Ted Bauer from Kings Contrivance to the Board of Directors of the Columbia Association. Eight votes were cast for his election, and he was successfully elected. CA's Board page now lists Ted Bauer as the Kings Contrivance representative, with three current vacancies remaining: River Hill, Long Reach, and Oakland Mills.

● **Three Board Vacancies Remain:** With Ted Bauer now seated for Kings Contrivance, the Board has moved from four vacancies to three. The remaining vacant seats are for River Hill, Long Reach, and Oakland Mills.

2. Facility, Planning & Open Space Updates

● **CA Headquarters and Adjacent Building Due Diligence Continues:** CA staff continues to go through its due diligence process for the potential purchase of CA's headquarters at 6310 Hillside Court and the adjacent building at 6315 Hillside Court. The proposed purchase price for the two buildings is \$10.3 million. CA has also estimated approximately \$3 million in renovations and buildout, for a total projected investment of about \$13.3 million. If due diligence is satisfactory, the proposed acquisition is expected to return to the Board for final consideration at the October 22, 2026 open meeting.

● **Why I Support the Headquarters Purchase:** I am in favor of CA purchasing its headquarters and the adjacent building, assuming staff's due diligence does not identify material concerns. The headquarters purchase makes economic sense to me. CA currently pays close to \$1 million per year in rent for its headquarters, while the purchase price for both the headquarters building and the adjacent building is \$10.3 million. CA has noted that purchasing the property would eliminate that annual lease expense, allow CA to build equity in an asset it controls, and provide additional rental revenue from tenants in the adjacent building.

● **Solar Panels Could Make the Purchase Even Stronger:** I also think CA should seriously evaluate installing solar panels on both the headquarters building and the adjacent building as part of the due diligence, renovation, and long-term facilities planning process. Solar could make the purchase even more economically advantageous by helping reduce future electricity costs while also contributing directly to CA's sustainability initiatives. This would be consistent with CA's existing green power efforts, including its use of solar power, renewable energy certificates, and multiple onsite solar photovoltaic installations across CA facilities.

● **Potential Childcare Facility:** I am also very supportive of the proposed childcare facility concept for the adjacent building. CA has described a possible learning center that could include an early learning center and a STEAM center. At full capacity, the early learning center could serve approximately 180 children from 6 weeks to 5 years old.

● **Why the Childcare Concept Matters:** Creating 180 childcare spots for this community is very needed. Childcare is a major economic issue for families, and I especially like the potential for CA to offer reduced rates to residents living on CA-assessed properties. If CA can make childcare more affordable for those residents, then living on CA-assessed property could become even more economically advantageous for Columbia families. That would be a meaningful way for CA to connect the annual charge residents pay with a direct, practical benefit for households with young children.

● **Updated CA Natural Resources Stewardship Plan Available Online:** The updated CA Natural Resources Stewardship Plan materials are available online. The NRSP is intended to guide CA's long-term stewardship of Columbia's natural areas, including forests, streams, open spaces, and wildlife habitats. CA's NRSP page identifies focus areas including community engagement, invasive and native plants, light pollution reduction, tree canopy and forests, turf and open space management, waste and composting, watershed management, and wildlife management.

● **NRSP Updates Presented at September Town Hall:** Updates to the NRSP were presented at last month's Town Hall meeting. I encourage residents who care about Columbia's open space, stream valleys, tree canopy, wildlife management, and long-term environmental stewardship to review the updated NRSP materials online.

3. Upcoming Events & Seasonal Activities

● **Color Columbia Plein Air:** CA is highlighting Color Columbia Plein Air on Saturday, October 17. The event invites residents to enjoy live outdoor art as more than 50 artists paint and draw landscapes, waterscapes, and architectural views around Lake Kittamaqundi and Wilde Lake.

● **Free Outdoor Yoga at Wilde Lake Barn:** CA is offering free outdoor yoga on Mondays through October 26 at 6:00 p.m. at the Wilde Lake Barn. This is a nice fall opportunity for residents to relax, recharge, and connect with the community.

● **Smart Cents Youth Program:** CA is also offering Smart Cents, a free eight-part program for students in grades 6–9 focused on earning, saving, spending, managing money, entrepreneurship, and healthy financial habits. The program starts October 14.

For more details on general updates, residents can visit the Columbia Association website, CA Blog, and the CA Board of Directors page.