

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting
December 4, 2023

Mayor Starker called the Study Session to order at 6:32 p.m.

This meeting was conducted both as a virtual meeting and hybrid, where some members of the Council or City staff were physically present at the Municipal building, and some members of the public attended in person as well. A quorum of members of Council were present in Council Chambers for this session.

The Mayor also explained the virtual/hybrid meeting format, how citizens will have the opportunity to be heard, and the procedures and policies to be followed.

Council Members present: Scott Ohm, Jenny Snell, Korey Stites, Amanda Weaver, Leah Dozeman, Dan Larsen, Janeece Hoppe (virtually) and Rachel Hultin. .

Also present: City Manager, Patrick Goff; City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; Deputy City Manager, Allison Scheck (remotely); Chief of Police, Chris Murtha; Director of Community Development, Lauren Mikulak; Director of Public Works, Maria D'Andrea; City Attorney, Jerry Dahl; Assistant City Manager, Marianne Schilling; Localworks Executive Director, Paige Piper; Management Analyst, Cole Haselip, other staff and interested residents.

Public's Right to Speak

No one came forward tonight.

Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:

Members of the public may visit the Wheat Ridge Speaks website and enter written comments of up to 1,000 words on any Council agenda item. The deadline for the public to submit comments is 12:00 Noon Mountain Time on the day of a Council session so that Council members, other elected officials and City Staff have time to review the comments before the meeting on Monday evening.

The City Clerk's Office transcribes those Wheat Ridge Speaks comments into these minutes, placing each comment along with the record for that agenda item.

No comments appeared in Wheat Ridge Speaks for this session of Council.

1. Wheat Ridge 102 Presentations

Issue

Wheat Ridge 102 participants have been working on two projects this fall: Green Business and Snow Removal Assistance. Program participants will present their finalized project blueprints to the City Council, with the goal of handing these projects off to staff for implementation.

Staff Reports

Assistant City Manager, Marianne Schilling, and Localworks Executive Director, Paige Piper presented the issue and summarized background on the issue, where Wheat Ridge 102 is a new program that grew out of Wheat Ridge 101, a seven-week interactive program designed to share detailed information about how the City of Wheat Ridge works, and to discuss strategies for community input and engagement. Participants in Wheat Ridge 102 were required to be graduates of the Wheat Ridge 101 program.

The first Wheat Ridge 102 program launched in September 2023, and was designed to follow a self-guided schedule with homework assignments, outside work requirements and a syllabus for specific milestones in the project timeline.

Each project, either Green Business or Snow Removal Assistance, required involvement with local businesses, community members and other stakeholders. Regular check-ins were required as part of the program, and the whole group was able to share questions and ideas with each other to strengthen the outcome of the projects.

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, engaging in discussion among themselves and with staff including:

- Several CM expressed their thanks for the staff efforts on this complex issue.
- A detailed discussion of the practical operation, legal requirements, and outcome desires for resolving this issue.

CM comments and feedback

Because this item was purely informational, no consensus was proposed.

CM profusely thanked the staff and even more so the participants who learned/worked through WR 102. They also acknowledged and thanked LocalWorks and its Executive Director, Paige Piper.

CM also opined that the WR 102 program was a rousing success.

CM discussed several internship opportunities for implementing some of the recommended action plans.

Clerk's note: The Mayor called for item 3 below, after the conclusion of item 1, rather than item 2. Item 2 was discussed after Council attended to item 3.

2. Community Advisory Group

Issue

Staff requests that the City Council revise its classification of the Community Advisory Group as a Hybrid Committee to a Staff-Selected Committee.

Staff Reports

Management Analyst Cole Haselip provided City Council prior actions and where the municipal courts financials were at the time of the prior meeting on Oct. 2, 2023, there was no Police Department representation at the meeting, and staff shared with Council that if there were any concerns with this framework, staff would be back to review those concerns. After the meeting, staff spoke with Police Chief Murtha and Division Chief Lorentz, who identified some concerns with establishing the CAG as a Hybrid Committee. It was determined that staff should return to council to present these concerns so that Council could make a well-informed decision.

Also relayed was some of the history of where the Wheat Ridge CAG was first established in 2018 with the goal of advancing the City's philosophy of relationship-based policing. One of its functions is to facilitate two-way communication between community members and the police. This practice is intended to foster constructive dialogue which results in enhanced policing strategies and develops community trust. The CAG also helps to organize and volunteer in events such as the City's National Night Out, which celebrates community safety and law enforcement professionals.

Discussion included but was not limited to:

- The CAG is a self-selected committee.
- The CAG often discusses sensitive topics.
- The effectiveness of the committee.

Mr. Haselip finished the presentation and stood by to answer questions.

CM had comments and questions:

Several CM and the Mayor thanked Chief Murtha for the informative presentation.

CM engaged in a discussion and exchange of questions and proposals with the staff and among themselves, addressing the Chief's recommendations. There were comments and concerns about the membership of the CAG, its charter and charges, and the transparency of the CAG's meetings and recommendations to the Chief of Police.

CM expressed support for the recommendation that the CAG be re-approved as a staff selected committee.

MPT Stites proposed a consensus for City Council to revise its classification of the Community Advisory Group from a Hybrid Committee to a Staff-Selected Committee.

Consensus attained.

Clerks note: This item 3 was addressed immediately following item 1 above, rather than in the order published in the agenda and Council Packet.

3. Overview of City Snow and Ice Control Policy and Related Effort

Issue

To provide an overview of the updated Snow and Ice Control Policy and the city's available resources for responding to this critical function. Community Service staff have not taken a proactive approach to addressing property owners who do not follow this ordinance. This has resulted in numerous complaints from pedestrians who cannot traverse the sidewalk network in a safe manner.

Therefore, staff is also seeking direction on whether or not the City Council wishes to consider a stronger response regarding warnings and notices of violation.

Staff Reports

Director of Public Works, Maria D'Andrea provided City Council prior actions and background where the city believes that it is in the best interest of the community to assume basic responsibility for snow and ice control on public streets. Effective snow and ice control is necessary for routine travel and the provision of emergency services. The city will attempt to provide such control in a safe and cost-effective manner while keeping in mind safety, budget, personnel, and environmental concerns.

Ms. D'Andrea also relayed that the city's funds are limited, and taxpayers require that they be spent cost-effectively. It is not possible to address all snow and ice issues simultaneously and completely. It is also not practical to maintain equipment and personnel availability at a level that is sufficient for all possible situations.

Therefore, priorities and levels of service have been established in line with the allocated resources. Providing a higher level of service or engaging in different activities will require additional funding and/or re-prioritization of existing resources to cover different priorities.

Discussion included but was not limited to:

- Priority Street Designations.
- Storm Classifications.
- Snowplow Map.
- Personnel
- Equipment
- Other Agency's Roadways
- Environment

Other items and question for consideration included the following topics:

- Should additional resources be considered to address snow plowing and/or removal from sidewalks?
- Should additional resources be considered to address snow plowing and/or removal from bike lanes?

- Should certain sidewalks and/or bike lanes be prioritized over current ones that are addressed by staff?
- Is there a desire to more proactively address violations of the sidewalk clearing code?

Ms. D'Andrea also spoke on how staff had researched how other cities maintained their streets, trails and sidewalks, as well as their snow removal techniques.

Ms. D'Andrea finished the presentation and stood by the answer questions.

CM had comments and questions:

Several CM and the Mayor thanked the staff for the informative presentation. They indicated a strong approval of a new software application that allows the public to see where plows have been, where they are, and to submit comments or requests.

CM engaged in a discussion and exchange of questions and proposals with the staff and among themselves.

CM Weaver commented on the discrepancy between residences and businesses that have sidewalks (which must be cleaned within 24 hours of the storm end) and those who do not have sidewalks. This creates issues of fairness and where pedestrians are to walk in locations without sidewalks.

Other CM commented on businesses facing our commercial corridors that plow their parking lots by piling snow and ice on the sidewalks. That creates obvious safety hazards, especially for cyclists, pedestrians and the disabled. The staff should strongly consider more stringent enforcement of snow removal in those commercial locations.

4. Staff Report(s)

Mr. Goff nothing more tonight.

Elected Officials' Report(s)

Clerk Kirkpatrick announced that the Cultural Commission has purchased all tickets for this Sunday's matinee presentation of A Christmas Cactus at the Wheat Ridge Community Theater.

CM Ohm thanked those who participated in the bicycle repair and refurbish event. It was a beautiful day and a very well attended and appreciated event. Some attendees asked when we will do the next one.

CM Hultin attended the CC4CA retreat this past weekend. During the happy hour she saw a number of WR folks who are now engaged in sustainability programs in other cities along the Front Range; another great kind of export from WR.

MPT Stites Local Works fundraiser is tomorrow night. He noted ribbon cuttings for new Chik-Fil-A and other businesses last week. He also applauded the holiday lighting held last weekend.

CM Snell

CM Weaver


CM Dozeman

Mayor Starker attended the Tabor Lake Apartment and Chik-Fil-A ribbon cuttings. He was very proud of our community and the nice event at the tree lighting. This Saturday is the opening and ribbon cutting for the new playground at Anderson Park

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 9:44 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON December 11, 2023.

— 

Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Korey Stites, Mayor Pro Tem