

STUDY SESSION NOTES

CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO

City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue

April 18, 2016

Mayor Pro tem George Pond called the Study Session to order at 6:30 p.m.

Council members present: Janeece Hoppe, Monica Duran, Kristi Davis, Tim Fitzgerald, George Pond, Zachary Urban, Genevieve Wooden, and Larry Mathews

Absent: Mayor Jay

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Public Works Director, Scott Brink; Administrative Services Director; Heather Geyer; interested citizens.

Councilmember Pond reported that the Mayor is absent due to damage at her house caused by the storm.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. Staff Reports(s)

Building Inspector Mr. Goff reported that the new chief building inspector started today. His name is Mike Arellano and he comes from Dallas with a broad range of experience. He will be introduced to the Council in the future.

Bike/Ped Master Plan Mr. Brink reported that \$25,000 was budgeted for the update of the 2009-2010 bike/ped masterplan. RFP's were sent out and all replies were significantly over budget, ranging from \$45K to over \$50K. Staff recommends the proposal from Thule Design Group for \$59,000. The study will have a robust public process that reaches out to different groups in the City and will identify gaps in the citywide system (e.g. Gold Line area). There will be money to cover this as the CIP budget has some things that will be under budget.

Q: Reaching out will include the "postcard invite" meetings and also using social media, identifying different stake holders, going out to businesses, be at events (Carnation Festival, Criterium, etc.) and an interactive map on the website.

Q: How many years will it be good for? It will outline a 5 to 10-year capital improvement plan, plus other things that can be done such as policy measures, ordinances, public education, etc.)

Q: Why is current plan not sufficient? The needs of some corridors are not addressed; no priorities are identified. The new plan will also identify other projects -- streets, drainage, etc.

Q: Hasn't the field work already been done on the ADA transition plan? Yes. This consultant will double check the work that was already done by student interns last year.
Q: Couldn't the ADA transition plan be combined with this contract? The ADA transition plan will be a separate RFP. Four plans have already been submitted.

The contract approval will come back to Council as it is over \$35,000.

Mayor pro tem Pond received approval from the Council to allow public comment from some citizens who had arrived late.

Public comment

Kim Calomino (WR) thanked Council for taking up what she believes is the most important issue facing the City -- long term fiscal sustainability. She thanked staff for the detailed and somewhat frightening report. There are things that need to be done and Council should think about how to communicate these needs to the citizens. She recommended neighborhood meetings to inform citizens of what it takes to maintain our assets, what will happen if we don't maintain them, and how we might move forward with ballot questions. She encouraged moving forward quickly on a ballot question to increase sales tax.

Rachel Hultin (WR), resident for 4 years, is excited about the community. She believes we have significant infrastructure needs and that we need to invest in our community. Council needs to provide bold leadership so we can take care of our streets and drainage/flooding issues, address safety, and maintain the level of service we have in our parks and recreation. She advised the best way to find out what those things are is to hold district meetings soon and find out what the people want. She expressed frustration there's no money to advance biking and cycling; we need money to make the roads work for everyone.

2. Long-term Fiscal Sustainability (Revenues/Fees, Expenses, Capital Projects) – Part I

Mr. Goff stated this is the first of 3 meetings on this topic. Tonight's discussion is to be general in nature. If we put something on the ballot the ordinance process would need to start about August 1 because the wording has to be to the County by September 1.

a. DIRT Task Force recommendations

Ms. Geyer gave a history of the DIRT Task Force.

- DIRT stands for Drainage, Infrastructure, Roads, and Trails.
- Created by then-Mayor DiTullio in 2007

- Consisted of a group of 18 that included 4 councilmembers and several community members
- It was done over several months and included public and staff input.
- \$143M in projects was evaluated, categorized and prioritized.

Mr. Goff distributed a larger, more detailed spreadsheet of the DIRT projects. He went through the projects that have been completed or partially completed.

- Clear Creek Trail connections and trailheads – partially completed
- Land banking of two lots at 44th & Upham; now senior apartments - completed
- 26th-29th, Sheridan to Fenton; curb/gutter/storm sewer; part of Ashland Reservoir project - done
- Park infrastructure upgrades (6 locations) - most are done
- Wadsworth reconstr, 36th to 46th; now 35th to I-70, ongoing -- partially completed
- Emergency warning system – done, and sirens are up
- Dispatch consoles, mobile and portable radios – partial, dispatch consoles in use
- CAD (computer aided dispatch) and RMS (records mgmnt regionalization) - done
- 38th & Depew -- property has been developed (Perrin's Row)

Mr. Goff drew Council's attention to a list of 12 projects (Attachment 2, last page) – “2016 Additions” that are **not** now on the DIRT list, but may rise in priority. They include:

- Clear Creek Crossing (CCC) infrastructure improvements
- Gold Line area infrastructure improvements (Ridge Rd, Ward Rd traf signal, other)
- ADA transition Plan – infrastructure improvements
- Bike/ped improvements
- City-wide drainage (Storm Sewer)
- Streets preventive maintenance
- Traffic signal upgrades and improvements
- Public improvement projects (development related)
- Street improvement projects (reconstruct – non-overlay/maintenance)
- Bridge maintenance and rehabilitation
- Technology updates (Asset management, software, hardware, other)
- Trail replacement (specific section of existing Clear Creek Trail)

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Council discussion points included:

- Revisit the DIRT list and update it; have a new group of folks look at it; how?
- Integrate Denver's bike path plans into ours
- Could we save the well house at the Ashland property? Mr. Goff will inquire.
- School site upgrades? We've partnered with schools on new playgrounds to allow neighborhood use. May not be such a g high priority now.
- One of the reasons Clear Creek Crossing (CCC) is still not developed is because there is about \$45-50M in public infrastructure that needs to be completed.
- CCC and Gold Line will likely require some public funds.
- We should consider funding sources. Are there any partners?
- Shouldn't do school projects before critical infrastructure
- Should be specific about the projects we put before the voters.

- Fee vs mill levy increase

- b. Maintenance (not operating expenses)

Ms. Geyer summarized Attachment 3, pointing out some of the larger items.

- Replacement of the Cisco firewall is a special non-yearly maintenance item.
- Preventive street maintenance is \$1.9M
- Total maintenance + equip. replacement & repairs = \$6.6M (14% of the budget)
(Maintenance \$5.1+M; Equipment replacement & repairs \$1.4+M)

- c. Ballot issues -- What other communities are doing ~ Heather Geyer

Ms. Geyer highlighted Attachment 4, which included two lists:

1. Information on 5 tax increases for infrastructure that have passed successfully (Commerce City, Denver, Oklahoma City, Boulder and Northglenn).
2. Information on 32 voter approved sales tax and mill levy increases in Colorado in '13, '14, and '15 for a variety of purposes (road maintenance, street improvements, rec centers, parks, trails, library needs, police station, etc.)

A common theme of successful ballot issues is being specific – telling people what they'll get and when. Public engagement is helpful and sunseting is a consideration.

Council comments/discussion/questions: 7:27

- People are currently paying more in taxes than they are for food, shelter and clothing; the anti-tax sentiment is understandable.
- All contributions by citizens, regardless of the label, are taxes.
- Are we being good stewards of the money we do have? We expend about \$1,365 per capita, but we aren't a full-service city. Need to first let people know we're spending their money efficiently, then we can tell them why we need more.
- Communicate to voters: specific projects, the cost, timeline, and other funding sources to be included. Sunseting the tax makes it more acceptable to voters.
- Need to let citizens know how much their online purchasing is costing the City in revenue.
- Important to let people know what their taxes go for. Educate folks. Tell them how little of their property tax we get.
- We could do a sales tax increase and a property tax mill levy increase.
- We need to be transparent, talk to people, get info out to them, hit a lot of points
- What about Wadsworth? \$6M is the City share, but there's a funding gap of \$14M.
- We could consider an increase in marijuana sales tax.
- If we don't have the proper match for Wadsworth, we would lose the \$25M grant.
- It's vital to have a good, logical priority list; should be need-based, not want-based.

Everyone seemed to agree we need to be specific.

d. Stormwater fee ~ Scott Brink

Mr. Brink highlighted the packet material list of what other cities on the Front Range do.

- Fees range from \$2-14 a month for a single family dwelling.
- Cities vary on how they use their stormwater fee: drainage projects, money to match for grants, routine maintenance, water quality

There was discussion about how to collect the fee. Discussion points included:

- Some cities add it to the water bill, but we're not a full service city so not an option.
- Doing it in-house would require hiring another staff person and buying equipment
- Easiest would be to contracting it out, with the fee paying for that
- We'd be working with several different water and sewer districts

Staff will provide information on options.

Discussion followed about how to set the fees and/or putting it on the ballot.

- 13,600 households in WR; for rentals it just goes to the property owner.
- Flat fee may be simpler
- Several factors to consider: single family vs multi family, businesses large and small, size of lot, amount of pavement. Can have a tiered system.
- How did we get here? What's gone on in the past to cause our current problems?
- We have lowest property tax, low sales tax, and no storm sewer.
- Create an ERU (Equivalent Residential Unit) by which to calculate bills, and some similar formula for commercial/industrial units,
- Concern related to exempt categories (school district)
- Impervious surfaces: Encourage private property owners to mitigate their impervious surfaces and possibly offer a credit. 7:58
- How much goes to administration?
- Having two/three different styles of tax increases is too complicated; won't pass.
- Storm water is important, but we need to prioritize our entire set of needs
- Sunsetting a stormwater fee doesn't make sense

There was general discussion about:

- Whether or not to have a storm sewer utility
- If it should be a Council-approved fee or a voter approved tax increase
- If Council passes a fee without voter approval, it may increase the likelihood of a sales tax question failing
- Should the tax be sunsetted or not?

There was consensus on the following:

- Council to have a mini DIRT task force at the next study session
- Staff to bring more specificity on projects and costs
- Staff to provide a cost matrix for different options on a storm water utility

3. Elected Officials' Report(s)

Clerk Shaver offered some historic perspective regarding the capital budget. She explained how for decades the City used one penny of sales tax for capital improvements and our roads and sidewalks were in very good shape. That policy was changed; we haven't had that one penny for several years. It could be changed back.

Monica Duran reported that some businesses have asked that the city staff host a meeting with businesses on 38th to discuss the new plan that Cre8 Your 38 has generated. They want to know expenses and costs. They'd prefer it be hosted by staff – not the consultant.

Zach Urban reported from CML that SB177 is passing on through committees. There are only 23 days left in the legislative session. ~ Regarding the request from business and property owners on 38th Ave, they would like:

- Cost, timelines, impact, and curb cut impacts so they can provide feedback
- A 30-day process with design presented to allow time for feedback
- Assurances there are no other considerations that would prevent/impact the completion of this project
- Assurance that the plan document has a rational basis based on reliable and reasonable current data and scientific methodology – including safety recommendations related to the narrowing of roadways and any impact on the LOS (level of service) for traffic and overall capacity

He would like the Cre8 Your 38 planning document to include an estimate of construction timeline, project zone, cost, and any potential funding sources. ~ Additionally, he has a set of 15 questions related to the stakeholder engagement process. These questions are about the process itself, not the content, so the Council can learn from this exercise -- regardless of the outcome.

Janeece Hoppe thinks it's important to get the businesses together in a meeting. From her past personal experience, she believes it's valuable to see how things work for each business.

Larry Mathews noted that the Littleton City Council is considering whether to dismantle their Urban Renewal Authority.

Tim Fitzgerald announced there will be a District 3 meeting on May 21 at 9:00 at the Rec Center. ~ He reminded folks there is a survey on the city website about ADU's (accessory dwelling units). He invited people to take the survey.

Kristi Davis announced that postcards have gone out for the three neighborhood meetings she will be having. ~ From the URA she reported:

- The Kipling Ridge project is a little over budget in revenues so the TIF is being paid back quicker -- and that's with one pad not yet rented.
- \$150K in TIF funds will be available that must be spent on public improvements in the 38th Avenue corridor.
- The URA hasn't met in a while.
- The second phase of Town Center Apartments is ready to open.

Genevieve Wooden announced that May 7 is the 44th Avenue Cruise. Most of the events will be at Anderson Park. A poker run is part of the event. ~ She reported hearing astronaut Joe Tanner speak at the high school. ~ Students made picnic tables. Each school will get a table to paint and they will be on display at the Carnation Festival. She thanked Jordan's Lumber on Ward Road for donating the lumber. ~ The STEM team leaves tomorrow for Detroit with their two cars. ~ She asked Council to consider a future study session topic on rules of engagement for councilmembers at public meetings and in different arenas, and also social media guidelines for councilmembers.

There was inquiry about the City's participation in a grand opening for the Gold Line. **Heather Geyer** gave an update on the Gold Line opening. The City will be participating; in July RTDF will give us a date -- possibly in October. We've budgeted \$20,000 for it. As 'end of the line' we will host the grand opening ceremony on a Friday for dignitaries; on Saturday we'll host something for the community. More information will be coming.

George Pond announced a tree branch drop off location in the parking lot behind the Parks office 44th & Field. A map with directions is on the website.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:45 p.m.



Janelle Shaver, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON May 9, 2016



George Pond, Mayor Pro Tem