

STUDY SESSION NOTES

CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO

City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue

May 1, 2017

Mayor Joyce Jay called the Study Session to order at 6:30 p.m.

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

Absent: Larry Mathews (excused)

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Attorney, Jerry Dahl; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Public Works Director, Scott Brink; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; other staff, guests, and interested citizens

CITIZEN COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Charlie Myers (WR) spoke in support of the Bike/Ped Master Plan. He's on the board of BikeJeffco. He believes having a master plan will move Wheat Ridge toward being a first class city for biking and walking. He spoke about crash data provided by WRPD that will provide a base line for future reference. He offered BikeJeffco's support, with ATAT, in helping the City further the masterplan; they can probably help with prioritization. They are pleased to see 96 bike facility projects on the list.

1. Staff Report(s)

a) Sign Code Update – *Reed v. Gilbert* – Kenneth Johnstone & Jerry Dahl

Mr. Dahl highlighted his memo to Council explaining this United States Supreme Court ruling of June, 2015. The decision has created a need for cities and counties across the nation to address their sign codes.

- The unanimous court decision holds that signs cannot be regulated by their content.
- If a sign must be read to know how it is regulated, that regulation is unconstitutional under the First Amendment.
- Undisturbed by the *Reed* ruling are local regulations about such things as lighting, location, signs with moving parts, size, and other non-content related features.
- Temporary events cannot be regulated separately because you have to read the sign to decide if it is temporary or not.

There are some changes we need to make as a result of this decision.

Ken Johnstone continued.

The City will comply with the Supreme Court decision and focus on the *Reed v Gilbert* issues. Additionally this is a good opportunity to make our sign code more user friendly.

Three minor topics to consider:

1. Illumination of LED signs. We currently have no regulations on brightness. Technology has advanced making it possible to adjust the level of illumination.
2. Off-premise business district signs. Business districts want signage that directs people to their area. Ex: Signs on Sheridan or Wadsworth for the 29th Ave area.
3. Temporary signs such as sign spinners and fluttering flags (pennants)

Questions and opinions followed. Topics included:

- Moving borders on LED signs and regulating brightness of LED signs
- Blade signs and iconic signs
- Could the time be regulated for sign spinners?
- Air giants and mannequins
- Motion signs near residential areas
- Per Mr. Johnstone, Code doesn't allow LED billboards with changing messages
- Should a sign be related to the property at hand?
- Mr. Dahl addressed off-premise signs
- Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS)
- Many cities exempt signs carried by people (includes sign spinners and solicitors)
- Is the cost to retrofit ambient light technology overly burdensome?
- Regulation for lighted signs should have clear criteria for illumination
- Regarding political signs: This is Council's opportunity to decide what it wants to allow on City property and public ROW. When a space becomes a "public forum", everyone must be treated equally; it is all or none.
- Parked trucks with signs that move
- Some duration element for signs that become tattered
- Banners have to be mounted to the wall; there are some size limitations and it can be displayed 365 days a year. There are some limits on pennants.
- Quantity of signs as visual litter
- Per Mr. Johnstone, temporary sign compliance has not been a code enforcement priority for the City; 25% of window area can be a signage.
- Per Mr. Dahl, allowing signage for permitted special events is acceptable.

Mr. Johnstone suggested that staff take this direction from Council and put together some options to be considered at another study session.

Councilmember Hoppe received unanimous consent to direct staff and the City Attorney to move forward with the *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* changes, to incorporate the items as discussed for illumination of LED signs, off-premises business district signs and temporary signs, and to include the allowance for blade signs and icon signs.

b) JEFFCO Bicycle Wayfinding Project – Scott Brink

Mr. Brink noted that as early as June the public may start to see regional wayfinding signs that are part of this county-wide effort.

- This effort was spearheaded by Lakewood and Jefferson County in late 2014.
- The planning group included Jeffco municipalities and representatives from CDOT, DRCOG, BikeJeffco and other bicycle advocacy groups.
- A grant was received to hire a consultant and develop maps.
- The intent is to provide direction and guidance to bicyclists on a regional level, while complimenting and working with local municipal wayfinding systems.

He went through some maps, examples of signs, and routes through Wheat Ridge. Routes to the Gold Line will be included.

2. Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan Update – Scott Brink

Mr. Brink introduced **Joe Fish** from the Toole Design Group, the Washington DC–based consulting firm that was hired to help put together the plan. A copy of the draft plan had been provided to Council prior to the meeting.

Mr. Fish reported they have done data collection, mapping of existing facilities and destinations, public outreach, and an open house. He gave a power point presentation outlining the process and key elements of the plan.

- Vision and Goals were developed in a workshop that included representatives from the City, the County, the School District, RTD, and community advocates.
- Online map-based survey was conducted
- Attended Ridgifest for feedback
- Open House for feedback on challenges and priorities
- Technical Advisory Committee helped throughout to ensure the project was headed in a good direction

Developed a vision statement for the master plan.

- Walking and biking to work in Wheat Ridge has risen in the last 15 years. Walking commutes rose from 2.1% to 2.5%; biking commutes rose from 0.3% to 1.4%
- Difficulties for walking include lack of and gaps in sidewalks.
- Difficulties for biking include quantity and speed of traffic, and lack of bike lanes.

Key recommendation themes for pedestrians

- access to bus stops, focus on key destinations, integration with ADA Transition Plan, serving the needs of all ages of the population

Key recommendation themes for bicycles

- access to Gold Line station, access to Clear Creek Trail, crossing I-70, connecting to neighboring jurisdictions

Maps identify

- highest priority gaps in sidewalks (They are mostly on high volume streets.)
- a bike network that identifies trails, bike lanes, and good continuous routes
- prioritized projects

Questions and discussion followed.

Councilmember Duran was informed that the extension of sidewalks on 29th westward from Jay will be considered for addition to the list.

Councilmember Fitzgerald received the following information:

- On Wadsworth, the blue dots include potentially separated dedicated bike paths.
- A side path is an 8-10 foot sidewalk for ped and biking next to the curb (e.g. Kipling).
- West side of Wadsworth 35th - 32nd would have a side path, but
 - It is not scheduled for reconstruction anytime soon.
 - It is not part of the Wadsworth project.
 - It would require additional ROW acquisition.
 - It would have to be pursued as a separate project.
 - It would solve the gap, but wouldn't save any money.

Councilmember Fitzgerald received unanimous consent to have staff investigate the possibility of adding a side path on the west side of Wadsworth between 35th and 32nd Avenues.

Councilmember Davis mentioned for the public that the cost table indicates side paths and sidewalks are \$1M per mile, bike lanes are \$25K per mile, and shared street is \$10K per mile. Mr. Brink noted those are average costs; variable costs include (or exclude) ROW acquisition, driveway reconstruction and tree removal.

From Councilmember Urban's questions

- There was discussion specifically related to a separated bike facility on Wadsworth. The bike masterplan has different indications than the Wadsworth plan. Mr. Goff suggested the masterplan could be changed to reflect the plans for Wadsworth.
- The prioritization tool for bike facilities was similar to what was used in the past and is not the same tool that was used for the ADA transition priorities.
- Crash locations were not considered in the prioritization, as those numbers are low. Higher bike volume results in greater safety consideration.
- Regarding the necessity for the plan to state that a non-profit is a better community outreach tool over the City, Mr. Fisher noted those are usually good collaborative relationships; non-profits usually have volunteers, while staff have other duties. The non-profits could assist with grants by providing volunteers and funding.

Mr. Brink reviewed the Next Steps.

Comments are still coming in from the neighboring cities, ATAT, BikeJeffco, school district, and the seniors. Those will be compiled and go to Mr. Fisher. The finalized plan will then come to Council for final approval.

3. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan Update – Scott Brink

Mr. Brink introduced **Jess Hastings** and **Jeff Sockel** from Alfred Benesch & Company, the transportation firm that was contracted to help develop the plan. He noted how staff members Steve Ngyuen (present) and Kelly Rosson were instrumental, and that staff members Russ Higgins, Chad Ensley and our intern Andrew did a lot of field work.

Mr. Hastings and Jeff Sockel shared in the presentation.

They reviewed why it's important to have an ADA Plan and what the goals are.

- Connectivity is important to be a destination city.
- It's federally mandated.
- Accessibility and safety
- City must have a complaint procedure and an ADA coordinator

Topics covered included:

- Transition plan goals
- Plan overview
- Design standards
- Role of the coordinator (engineering department highly involved)
- Public outreach and an open house were used; there were a dozen responses.
- Self-evaluation components for the City (Programmatic vs physical accessibility)
- Public involvement
- Self-evaluation
- PROWAG guidelines for ramps

Curb ramp findings:

- 1,800 curb ramps (about 1,700 are responsibility of the City): 3% are compliant; 80% have improper landings; 50% have improper slope
- 150 push buttons, 70% are at wrong height (42"); 10% (15) meet requirements
- These are typical findings for compliance

Sidewalk evaluation is underway.

They outlined implementation priorities and how to target/address problems over time. Individual requests should be handled as soon as practical.

Mitigation costs were addressed. There are low to high priorities for ramps and sidewalks. Total would be \$4M+. He presented three implementation schedules.

Potential strategies and programs include

- Training and Education
- Modification of City policies
- Routine maintenance projects
- Targeted projects
- Address as part of other projects

Funding options

- CIP and maintenance projects
- Federal aid or grants
- IGA's
- Bonding
- Reallocation of department budgets
- Creation of taxing districts (TID, CID, TAD)
- Adopt fees to fund improvements

The Grievance process:

Complaints filed; investigation by the City; ADA coordinator provides written response; appeal to ADA coordinator (if required). Documentation is essential for the City.

Going forward:

- Proactively improve accessibility
- Address grievances
- Periodic review of and update of plan
- Update standard details
- Capture approved design exemptions (compliance technically not feasible)

Discussion followed.

- Data on sidewalks should be finished in another year. It's very labor intensive.
- Has the City had any complaints? No formal process exists, but the concerns that have come in have been addressed.
- For the intersection prioritization tool, recommend adopting the curb ramp element.
- Mr. Goff noted staff has already plugged \$50K/year into the budget for the next ten years for this. Other revenue sources are possible.
- Councilmember Hoppe would like to know the cost for the sidewalks before budget priorities are addressed.
- There is no set time for ultimate compliance. Trouble from the Department of Justice happens when an amount is set and not spent. The best plan is to be consistent.
- Grants can be applied for, but they are time consuming and not guaranteed.
- Mr. Goff noted the City is working with RTD and Arvada on grants for the TOD area.

No action was necessary. The final plan will come to Council for adoption.

4. Elected Official's Report(s)

Genevieve Wooden noted the Martensen open house will be in May. The public is welcome to come and take a tour. The facility is being called the Frank deAngelis Center for Community Safety. ~ The Everitt Resource Fair from last Saturday is reschedule to this Saturday at from 10-2.

Kristi Davis reported Urban Renewal meets tomorrow at 6pm. Topics will include: 1) Circle K (NW corner of 38th & Kipling) looking to build a new facility; 2) discussion about Hacienda Colorado coming to the Applewood Shopping Center, and 3) conceptual plans for the light rail area.

Zachary Urban announced that the WRHS STEM team won the national championship again this year in the fuel cell car category.

Janeece Hoppe said the WR Business District met in April. There were requests for updating some signs; she doesn't think anything was finalized.

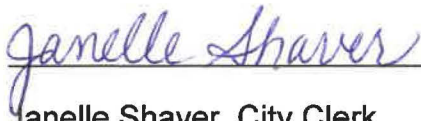
Monica Duran invited everyone to attend the informational community meeting this Thursday at 6:30 at the Rec Center.

Clerk Shaver reported she would be out of the office Friday and Saturday at a Community Corrections conference in Colorado Springs.

Mayor Jay noted her Coffee with the Mayor this Saturday at Vinnola's.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 9:00 pm.



Janelle Shaver, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON May 22, 2017



George Pond, Mayor Pro Tem