

SPECIAL STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO

City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue

July 24, 2017

Upon adjournment of the Regular City Council Meeting

Mayor Joyce Jay called the Study Session to order at 9:19 p.m.

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

Absent: George Pond (excused)

Also present: Deputy City Clerk, Robin Eaton; City Attorney, Jerry Dahl; City Manager, Patrick Goff, Administrative Services Director, Heather Geyer, Public Information Officer Sara Spaulding, and interested citizens.

CITIZEN COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEM

none

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. 2017 Election Forum

Background from July 17, 2017 Study Session:

The City budgets to host one election forum annually that is broadcast live on WRTV8. The cost for this WRTV8 production is \$425. That is the direct cost for the videographer's time. Up until 2016, Wheat Ridge United Neighbors hosted the annual Election Forum, with the exception of 2009, when Enterprise Wheat Ridge was the host. In 2016, the Wheat Ridge Chamber hosted the forum. Administrative Guideline No. 3 outlines the City's current guidelines on managing election forums. Guideline No. 3 does not address how a host will be chosen when more than one person/entity files an application to host the forum.

Heather Geyer discusses Options 1-4 for Council's considerations and possible direction regarding the 2017 Election Forum.

1. Provide direction in applying the Guideline to multiple host applications *this year*.

As mentioned, the Guideline does not address how a forum host should be selected when more than one person/entity files an application. In the event that CFIWR, the League of Women Voters, or some other organization files an application to host this year's forum, staff would like direction on how to choose the host.

2. Provide direction to amend the Guideline to address multiple host applications permanently:

This year's potential for competing forum hosts may be an anomaly. However, Council may wish to take this opportunity to permanently amend the Guideline to address this scenario in the future as well.

3. Designate a neutral third party, such as the League of Women Voters, to host the forum this year and/or future years.

Perhaps in conjunction with Option # 2 above, while the Council considers how to address the multiple-host issue in the future, Council could designate a neutral host to determine the 2017 host.

4. Amend the Guideline to include Moderator Guidelines:

Questions about how the moderator conducts the forum have also arisen. The Guideline does not currently provide guidance to moderators. Staff believes it would benefit all involved, including the moderator, to have guidance on conducting the Forum.

Staff recommends option # 3 as well as the addition of Moderator Guidelines for this year and for future Election Forums.

Council comments and questions:

Councilmember Davis supports the recommendation of Option 3 and states that the League of Women Voters has helped us with a previous forum. Questions can be submitted by other organizations that want to be involved in it or have questionnaires from publications that can be posted on their websites. Having no elected officials be part of the process is a good thing to do.

Councilmember Fitzgerald also supports Option 3 but to possibly approach it from a different angle concerning the sponsor rules for Channel 8 by changing the wording to list moderators or hosts instead of sponsor. This would change the concept of being a sponsor and using a community group as a sponsor of a city event and how it might relate to possibly having control over the events.

Ms. Geyer said that if council wants someone with a name recognition to serve as moderator, then that can be added to the preferred option. The City has not budgeted for this but someone from outside can be requested to moderate the forum.

Councilmember Mathew does not want to have the same organization put on the Forum throughout the years and would like to see the two different groups get together to run the forum jointly, each asking a specific list of questions.

Councilmember Duran has no concerns with the League of Women's Voters putting on the forum but to change the criteria after an organization has submitted an application would not be fair this year.

Councilmember Hoppe asked Ms. Geyer about the moderator guidelines on where it shows how the questions are collected, sorted, and then chosen. Can we add to the guidelines that those questions will need to have City staff approval?

Ms. Geyer responded that the sponsors typically perform that, but all of them are approved by the City in advance and we can voice any concerns with them, if found. There is general language in the sponsor and moderator guidelines and it can be made to be more explicit.

Councilmember Hoppe feels that we should go ahead and use the first applicant being the West Chamber and if we want to change it for the years coming then there can be no cry of foul.

Councilmember Wooden asks if there was anyone else who knew the Forum was open for application and was informed that the City does not solicit for those applications. As such and that the City has not had a procedure in the past, she is in supportive of Option 3 and to have a professional third party moderator if available.

Councilmember Davis is fine with the West Chamber or League of Women Voters especially since there is no policy that the City accepts the first application submitted; even being only a partial application. She does not feel that Citizens for an Inclusive Wheat Ridge would be acceptable as they are not an un-biased group, if only perceived that way. The time as well should be moved to be a more reasonable hour so that people can attend the entire forum, not only partially.

Councilmember Urban has concerns that a special study session is being taken up for this matter and there are other more pressing concerns that the city should be hearing. Anyone that hosts this forum would be respectful of the City and Council Chambers and this is another example of those who do not like those who have applied and really does not need to be discussed. This item should have been discussed way before the forum had been scheduled and that we need to move on from it.

Mayor Jay added that for many years, United Neighborhoods had put on the forum and this issue had never been presented before, and there needs to be some type of policy on how the City fills this gap. Especially since these are important forums for the citizens and we have a duty to make sure of that, and that they occur in the most honorable way that we can.

Councilman Fitzgerald does not see that we are breaking any rules and we have enough time to do the right thing. Out of fairness, anybody that is interested gets a fair chance and that political interest groups should not be involved in the forum in any manner.

Councilmember Fitzgerald called for a consensus to use Option 3 for this year and to incorporate adding to the guidelines, City approved questions and a City approved start time and date. The consensus failed.

Councilmember Duran called for a consensus on Option 4 to honor this year's applicant, the Wheat Ridge Chamber, with the addition of a City approved start time, City approved questions, and the other moderator guidelines under Option 4. In addition there be no co-host and to look for a process for the future. The consensus failed.

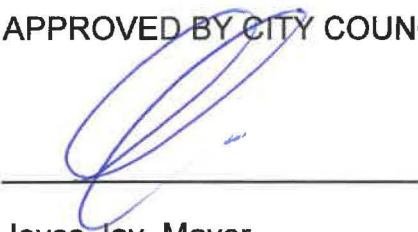
Councilmember Hoppe asked for a consensus that for the elections in 2018 to go with Option 3 to designate a neutral third party, such as the League of Women's Voters, to host the Forum for future years. The consensus passed.

ADJOURNMENT The Special Study Session adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robin Eaton", written over a horizontal line.

Robin Eaton, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON August 14, 2017

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joyce Jay", written over a horizontal line.

Joyce Jay, Mayor