

## **SPECIAL STUDY SESSION NOTES**

### **CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO**

City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue

**January 22, 2018**

Upon adjournment of the Regular City Council Meeting

Mayor Bud Starker called the Special Study Session to order at 8:06 p.m.

Council members present: George Pond, Janeece Hoppe, Kristi Davis, Tim Fitzgerald, Zachary Urban, Larry Mathews, Leah Dozeman

Absent: Monica Duran (excused)

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; other staff, guests and interested citizens.

**CITIZEN COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS** none

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

#### **1.** Contract Building Division Services

Staff presentation ~ Ken Johnstone

Mr. Johnstone briefed Council on the proposed plans to outsource the Building Division.

In the past the City has contracted with a professional firm for some building services.

- The scope of that work has fluctuated depending on work volume, whether or not we are fully staffed at a given time, and what particular skill sets and certifications are available from our staff at a given time (electrical, plumbing, mechanical, residential, commercial).
- For 4-5 years the FTE staff for the Building Division has consisted of two permit techs, three inspectors/plans reviewers, and the Chief Building Official (CBO)

Two significant events occurred in 2017 relative to our contract inspection role.

- A routine bid process occurred for outside services. The company that was hired left abruptly and Charles Abbott and Associates (who had participated in the bid process) was able to step in quickly in mid-April.
- Two weeks later the hail storm occurred.
  - We were fortunate Charles Abbott had a good depth of resources and could bring in people from Georgia, Nevada and California on a temporary basis.
  - It has been 10 months.

- At times we were adding as many as four permit techs and six inspectors.
- Even without the storm it has been a busy year with other development requiring services.
- We have been able to maintain our next-day inspection protocol and keep turn-around time on plan review up to our standards.

Another challenge has been the difficulty of keeping a Chief Building Officer.

- The position has essentially been vacant for 3-4 years.
- He referenced documentation showing that the building inspection field as a profession has not kept itself fully staffed nationally. It is a competitive industry and it hasn't maintained the number of professionals needed. They have an aging talent pool that hasn't been adequately replenished. CBOs and inspectors are a limited talent pool.

All these events and circumstances led the staff to explore a new business model. We propose to fully outsource our building division services with Charles Abbott and Associates. This is not a unique model. There are cities that outsource some or all of their building services. Centennial outsources all of its building division.

He pointed Council to the financial examination of outsourcing the building division. We have three fine employees and have asked Charles Abbott to offer them jobs.

Discussion followed.

Councilmember Davis would like the contract to contain quality metrics, expectations for judging their services, ways to survey customer service and guidelines for turn-around time. Mr. Johnstone explained that Charles Abbott would be required to meet or exceed existing standards for services.

Councilmember Hoppe asked how complaints from the community would be handled.

- Mr. Johnstone said the process would be the same way it is now, and he explained the complaint process.
- The CBO will still report to him and have regular meetings with him.
- The annual performance evaluation will be a little different than regular employees.
- Hopefully the CBO will move here. They could hire local and/or include their existing employees.

Councilmember Mathews expressed concern about consistency and continuity. Mr. Johnstone reported the three inspectors we have now from Charles Abbott have been here for 4-6 months. Every effort is made to have repetition – inspection by the same person. They typically document requirements on the inspections. Councilor Mathews was concerned about having a stable workforce. Mr. Goff added he too wants the work force to be consistent, and explained the workers would work onsite here.

Mr. Johnstone explained the compensation procedure for paying Charles Abbott.

Councilmember Urban inquired what the bid process was. Mr. Johnstone said the bid process in early 2017 was a competitive process. The first contracted firm did not work

out, and we were able to contract with Charles Abbott quickly. This arrangement under consideration was not rebid, but all these services were included in the initial bid in 2017.

Councilmember Hoppe asked if the process for becoming licensed will change. Mr. Johnstone said not initially. Charles Abbott has a very deep team.

Mr. Johnstone made the point that we have worked with Charles Abbott for a year. If they can go to their team in California and offer these jobs, it will be more attractive if it is a 2 or 3 year contract.

Councilmember Mathews asked where plans would be reviewed. Mr. Johnstone said some would be done on site; some would be shipped out. Our planners are involved. Longer projects can be given to people with appropriate competency. If the plans have to go to California will they be familiar with our laws? Yes.

Clerk Shaver expressed concern about maintaining the excellent turnaround time the City provides for Public Information Requests. The current staff is extremely knowledgeable and responsive. Mr. Goff reported that the current employees have been offered jobs and have accepted. Nothing will change in that respect.

Councilmember Mathews inquired how change orders and overtime would be handled. Mr. Johnstone reported that Charles Abbott will be motivated to *not* pay overtime. The nuances of change orders and some other matters are still being worked out.

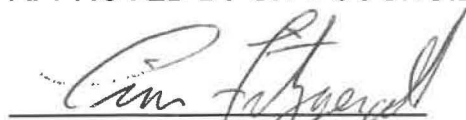
Councilmember Mathews asked about bonding and performance penalties. Mr. Johnstone wasn't sure how performance penalties would look in a professional services contract, but indemnification and insurance will be standard requirements.

Councilmember Davis asked for consensus to proceed with a contract to have our building services outsourced. The consensus was approved 5-2.

**ADJOURNMENT** The Special Study Session adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

  
Janelle Shaver, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON February 26, 2018

  
Tim Fitzgerald, Mayor pro tem