

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue
March 5, 2018

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

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

Absent: Monica Duran (excused)

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Parks and Recreation Director, Joyce Manwaring, other staff, guests and interested citizens.

CITIZEN COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

Tony Collins (Hylands Ranch) has served as president, vice-president or field manager of the Denver Men's senior baseball league for over 30 years. He has played over 500 games at Anderson Field himself, and the league over 5,000 games in 30 years. He has helped work on the pitcher's mound -- donating time and money. It is a home away from home for him from February to November. He told Council there aren't enough fields to play on in the Denver area -- less than five lit fields are accessible to them. He told how well known this field is -- everyone knows where it is. By the time he heard about this he thought it was a done deal. Now he hopes it can be saved.

Dick Orcutt (WR) said when the vote for the bond issue came up (which he voted for) the baseball community was naïve. They thought money would be used to improve the field. ~ He reported the support to keep this field runs very deep. A sister organization, the National Adult Baseball Association, whose national headquarters are in Littleton, has 80-90 teams in Denver alone. They report they could play on the Anderson Field every day and all day/nite on weekends for 6-7 months of the year at a rate higher than what Parks is currently receiving, but they've never been able to get on the field. ~ With the number of fields shrinking, he predicted that if Council lets this field go, it won't be long before they will be prodded to build another one. He suggested the field and lights can be used for other events; an entrance onto the field already exists and another entrance near right field would be economical. He asked why Council would want to cause a problem for themselves by getting rid of something that's a tradition. Why would they try to figure out a place for a new field when they already have one? ~ He suggested the Parks and Recreation Department has not used this well-known landmark field as the income producer it could be. He suspects an undercurrent of wishes to remove the field to reduce the work so the field can be idle most of the time and have an occasional event. He posed there is plenty of space for other events. ~ He apologized for the baseball folks not entering the conversation sooner. They didn't have the slightest idea they would ever be in a position that this would even be thought of.

Rollie Sorrentino (WR) noted having spoken before in support of keeping Anderson Field. He doesn't know what's in the presentation for Council; he would like to comment on it after it is presented. ~ He delivered a message from Adam Miller, the WRHS baseball coach, who couldn't be here due to baseball practice. His teams use the field and he supports saving it. ~ Mr. Sorrentino said it's about the future. This icon in Wheat Ridge is in an ideal location; foul balls don't go onto roads; the lights are down low. He suggested it's not a good idea to remove what you have before another location is found.

Mayor Starker advised Mr. Sorrentino that Council Rules limit public comment to the beginning of the meeting only.

Tom Sondheim (WR) expressed his concerns again with five questions:

- 1) Why not improve the present sight?
- 2) If you're moving it, where to?
- 3) Is there a vision regarding baseball in the community?
- 4) How many open field areas do we already have?
- 5) Isn't there a gain to the Carnation Festival from the lights at this field?

1. Staff Report(s) none

2. Anderson Park Baseball Field Relocation Options

Joyce Manwaring began with a reminder that the Masterplan that was adopted included removing the field. City Council had also requested information on possible relocation options and costs associated with those options, including lights.

She started with a summary of reasons for removal of the ball field.

- 1) To create a festival friendly park
- 2) Majority of use is by one group (MSLB); non-residents; April thru September.
WRHS uses the field 2 months in the spring and doesn't use the lights.
- 3) Cost of replacing lights
- 4) Periodic complaints by neighbors to the east and south about the lights

She went through the field specifications and size requirements for a regulation baseball field. It requires 4 acres for the field, plus more area for parking.

The main differences between a regulation adult baseball and softball field requirements:

- Pitcher's mound
- Size of field -- Softball fields require 2.5 acres
- Grass versus skinned infield
- Ages served -- Softball fields can be used by little league baseball

We receive about \$9K a year in revenue from adult baseball.

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

Ms. Manwaring reviewed the search criteria for another field. It included:

- Vacant parcels, private and city owned, 4 acres or larger
- Not a site of impending redevelopment
- Potentially accessible from a public street
- Existing softball fields that could be converted
- Can't be an Open Space area that is restricted from active use by resolution'

Results

- 5 parcels identified. Fruitdale Park is the only open area meeting all the criteria.
- No existing park fields have the space needed for a regulation size baseball field.

Cost

- Estimated cost to build a field that would replace Anderson: \$400,000 to \$450,000
- Cost variables (beyond construction costs) include land purchase, water tap fees, parking lot, bleachers, scorer's booth, sand-based infield, and retaining walls.
- Lighting costs: estimate \$285,000 - \$325,000
- Total estimated cost range (without land purchase): \$685,000 to \$775,000

Options

- Gather information regarding private properties to include seller interest and cost
- Hold neighborhood meeting on Fruitdale Park
- No action
- Other

Extensive discussion followed. Topics included but were not limited to:

- How to make Anderson Field a flex field
- The Festival likes the field there for staging the fireworks and for the lights.
- The lights are the only source of lighting for the Festival. It would cost to install new lights for the Festival?
- Moveable fences would allow for other uses. Moveable fence products exist.
- Some neighbors like the lights as it deters the homeless from setting up camps.
- Possibility of a partnership with the school district to light Everitt's field. Not likely, as all HS fields must be the same. e.g. If one has lights, they all must have lights.
- Clear Creek Crossing is not an option. All property is platted for other use.
- Commercial developments are not required to have parkland dedication.
- There is some soccer practice on Anderson Field in the fall.
- Highest reason for removing the baseball field was the public input process – not the need for soccer fields.
- Performances in the park serves 300-350 users.
- We will pay for lights regardless. Concerts and festivals need them too. If we yank the lights, we'll regret it; we'll have to put lights in later.
- Surely there are ways to make the infield flexible for concerts; Coors Field does it.
- Councilmember Dozeman represented the Festival in the public process. She was disappointed there was no option offered to keep the baseball field.
- Maintenance costs for the field are about \$48K a year. Context is necessary, as not all fields generate revenue.

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

- Fruitdale Park would accommodate three soccer fields; Anderson Park only two.
- The Fruitdale Park Masterplan was done in the early 1990's; should be revisited.
- Surely lighting technology has made advances regarding lighting pollution and glare.
- Should ask the baseball folks what ideas they have about flexibility.
- The sticking point is flexibility; some kind of lights should stay.
- Would there be staff costs to administer a moveable fence?
- Still want to look for another location.
- Respect the public process, but sometimes there are unintended consequences.
- Mr. Goff noted that new land would likely cost about \$2M.
- If we keep the baseball field, would it hinder any of the other planned uses? No.
- Ms. Manwaring advised it's not the design, it's the budget. However, there is some cost savings in keeping the baseball field.
- Re-doing the Fruitdale masterplan will take a long time; and the dog park is there.

Councilmember Pond received consensus to.....

- 1) Look at the Fruitdale Park masterplan for possibility as a relocation site
- 2) Talk to the school district about partnering to light the Everitt field (or other).
- 3) Pursue lights in the Anderson Park masterplan
- 4) Pursue the feasibility for Clear Creek Crossing or Coors property for a field

Councilmember Davis received consensus to

- 5) Ask the consultant to look at the possibility for the design of the Anderson ball field as a flexible space.

Ms. Manwaring advised that all 5 actions were feasible, but noted the Fruitdale Masterplan will be a much longer process.

3. Tree Grant Program ~ Margaret Paget

Joyce Manwaring began with an overview of the existing Forestry Program and additional background regarding the existing urban tree canopy.

In 2002/2003 five of seven full time positions were eliminated.

- In 2004 duties of the Open Space Supervisor expanded to supervise both OpenSpace and Forestry/Horticulture (previously supervised by City Forester)
- In 2012 one horticulture tech was added back.

2018

Current staff is 3 FTE: 1 forestry tech, 1 forestry assistant and 1 horticulture tech

Scope of work for Forestry:

- 2 FTE's, plus 1-2 seasonal
- 8,000 City-owned trees in parks and ROWs
- Inventoried trees do not include Open Space/Greenbelt or Lena Gulch drainage

Tasks for City tree maintenance:

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

- Tree inventory tracking location, species, condition and health
- Working with residents on trees in ROW's or in front of houses
- In-house removals, pruning and planting (mulching, wrapping, watering)
- Insect/disease management: detection; spraying; treatment; Emerald Ash Borer
- Contract management for inspections, removal, pruning and planting
- Purchasing
- Christmas Tree drop off (recycling and chipping)
- Education and Outreach
- Development Review – review landscape plans for Community Development
- Project review – tree assessment for interference with construction projects (Public Works)
- Herbicide application, certification, record tracking
- Snow removal team for parks and facilities
- On-call duties
- Storm response (Wind, hail and snow events average 1-2 per year since 2009)

Program and Services eliminated due to no funding and no staff capacity

- Cost sharing on tree planting with private property owners
- Cost sharing or “loan” programs for dead tree removal
- Arborist services and assessments on private property
- Code Enforcement for hazardous trees and/or landscaping on private property
- Eliminated citizen Arborist Board

Current Forestry Programs

- Happiness Gardens – 120 plots
- TLC Team tree assessments – Police Department
- Tree Company licensing
- Tree City USA
- Memorial Trees in parks
- Volunteer projects: IES, Wheat Ridge High School, scout groups
- Wood Recycling mulch and limited firewood – free program for residents

Horticulture Scope of Work and Tasks

- Maintain 102 annual displays, (71 flower beds and 31 containers) ,109 perennial beds and 108 shrub beds in parks, streetscape, traffic calming islands and ROW
- Annual design/redesign of beds
- Material purchasing/quantities of species, locations, pick up
- Planting
 - Herbicide application, certification, record tracking
- Seasonal weeding/dead heading
 - Snow removal
- Mulching
 - On-call response duties
- Watering

Increase in Scope of Work since 2002 layoffs

- Addition of 4 parks – Founders', Hopper Hollow, Creekside and Discovery
- 38th Avenue Streetscape – Sheridan to Harlan
- 38th Avenue Pop Up Café planters and street planters
- ROW Streetscape at TOD site and Tabor Street
- 32nd Avenue Dudley to Yarrow planting beds – 6 unirrigated (hand watered)

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

- Kipling and I-70 – Landscaped entry and exit ramps
- 50th Avenue median at Target
- As projects and work loads allow, staff in Forestry Horticulture, Parks and Open Space Sections crossover and support projects and workloads of other sections

Tree Needs -- Margaret Paget elaborated on current Tree Needs in parks and ROW:

- A 5-year maintenance plan is being developed with costs to include: removal of 30 trees per year, rotational pruning, aerial lift inspection of largest trees,
- Pruning and hazardous large tree inspection
- Additional forestry assistant request for 2018, will request again in 2019
- Current contractual annual budget for Forestry services is \$180,000
- Emerald Ash Borer Plan/Program (protection/treatment, removal, disposal, replace)

A City Tree Grant Program?

Ms. Manwaring advised we do not have the staff capacity to administer it, but it could be contracted out.

- Tasks and scope would need to be identified
- She went through some examples of costs for various elements of a tree removal/pruning program
- City Council needs to decide:
Amount of funding? Certain area? Target number of trees to be removed? Only removal or include pruning? How many years? Any cost sharing? Income level qualification? First come first served or by tree condition based on assessment?
- Mr. Goff advised the issues are staff time and the need for extra staff for management

Discussion followed.

- Councilmember Hoppe explained how she envisions the grant program, and
 - Because we have older trees and elderly citizens, she would like a cost sharing program that includes removal, pruning and/or replacement.
 - She'd like to use local contractors that are already licensed.
 - She approached Localworks' board members about managing the grant program. They are excited about it, but would have to be approved by their board. Their staff has experience administering grants, but they would have to be compensated for their time.
 - Councilmember Dozeman asked about staff time if the City managed this, rather than Localworks. Mr. Goff advised staffing would depend on the scope of work and amount of funding for the program. They considered just having Localworks administer the pre-approval process. Staff would be needed for tree assessments and working with the contractors. Councilmember Dozeman expressed concern about adding too many bureaucratic steps.
- Councilmember Mathews pointed out that private property rights include responsibility to maintain the property. Where does this end?

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

- Councilmember Hoppe felt the work should be done and paid for by citizens before grant money was given out. She also thinks the cost for Localworks to manage the program is reasonable.
- Councilmember Davis agreed about property ownership responsibilities. She presented questions about who and what would be eligible for grants.
- Councilmember Fitzgerald pointed out this doesn't do anything for trees in the ROW or address the Ash Borer issue that we will have to face. He approves of Localworks managing the grants. ~ Mr. Goff noted that many cities require citizens to maintain ROW trees in front of their houses.
- Councilmember Urban asked if there were any goals for the number of City trees. Ms. Paget said there was nothing specific, but that could be done.
 - Councilmember Urban suggested reaching out to large landowners that have the space (school district, etc.) about helping them add more trees.
 - He agreed with private responsibility, but noted that sometimes when a tree/branch falls on power lines it affects others, so there is a preventative aspect of this that could be justified.
- Councilmember Pond elaborated on his main concerns of safety and forestry management. Regarding managements he supports a lean efficient process, but knows there will be some cost. He supports equity for services offered, but agrees there should be some type of need-based element.

Several councilors felt it should be based on need, and for trees that are dangerous.

There was discussion about where the funds would come from - general budget, TABOR overage, or roofing permit revenues. Mr. Goff advised that TABOR is still being decided and that Council never really stipulated how the tree program would be funded.

- Councilmember Mathews felt that excess dollars should be spent in public ROW.
- Councilmember Davis suggested we have bigger priorities.

Councilmember Hoppe asked for consensus to table the program as currently presented, but if we do this later that staff provide more information about levels of income and financial need in the City. Mr. Goff said that could be put together. The consensus did not have sufficient support to pass.

There were some additional comments from the Council. Without objection, Mayor Starker declared there was consensus to postpone this subject indefinitely.

Mayor Starker declared a 10 minute recess at 8:54pm.
The meeting resumed at 9:02pm.

4. Landscape Inspection Program Update ~ Meredith Reckert

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

Meredith Reckert gave a Power Point presentation updating Council on the creation of and preliminary results from the pilot Landscape Inspection Program that staff began in 2017.

- Landscaping is primarily and historically done by Code Enforcement.
- Commercial and industrial developments have landscape requirements. Maintenance may not occur.
- In the summer of 2017 the Planning Division created a program for the proactive management of landscaping.
- Site selection focused on property developed within the last 10 years and included commercial, industrial, and planned residential development located primarily on collector and arterial streets.
- The process included hiring an intern, developing a list of properties, locating approved plans in the City archives, performing site visits and documenting areas of concern. The properties were contacted and staff worked with the owners to achieve compliance.
- Due to time and seasonal weather constraints, owners were offered a Landscape restoration agreement deferring completion until June 2018.

Pictures of sample infractions were shown – including before and after pictures.

- 45 site around town were inspected. 35 property owners responded to initial letter.
 - 12 properties were brought into full compliance
 - 8 owners did some work and will finish in 2018
 - 11 property owners still corresponding with staff
 - 10 didn't respond; will be contacted again this spring.
 - 2 owners objected to added investment ("Just cut it down", and have nothing.)
- Cost to City was minimal. \$6,240 paid the intern 25 hrs/week for 5 months – with some assistance from Ms. Reckert. Use of City vehicle, computer, office supplies.
- Most property owners agreed that quality landscaping is vital for a positive image of the city and are willing to work on it.

Ken Johnstone had some comments:

- We do a good job up front to see that proper landscaping is installed, but we don't have follow-up to make sure it's maintained. We need to create an ethos for a desire to keep landscaping looking nice.
- It's good people acknowledged this is important and that they need to spend money.
- We would like to start earlier in the 2018 growing season (budget more hours).
- We didn't budget for this in 2018 - wanted to talk to Council first. But there is money and we can do a supplementary appropriation. Staff request is for \$10,000 this year.

Questions and discussion followed.

Councilmember Mathews had questions.

- How many other properties are there? 100's. Could probably do a four year cycle. Hope to create an expectation for the business owners that they will be visited.

STUDY SESSION NOTES: March 5, 2018

- Enforcement tools? We have the administrative hearing process. We didn't go to the court level yet on our pilot effort.

Councilmember Davis believes we need to keep on the 10 who did not respond, and thinks that many of the worst offenders are older properties.

Mr. Johnstone addressed some of the challenges with older properties.

- May not even have a landscape plan.
- Some have old irrigation systems that have been allowed to deteriorate.
- They don't budget for landscaping. Would like to change that mentality over time.

Councilmember Urban suggested reaching out to all property owners to help create an awareness of expectations (i.e. give fair warning)? Mr. Johnstone said staff could do that.

Councilmember Hoppe wants to be sure we aren't overlapping the TLC program areas.

Mr. Johnstone listed what residential landscaping requirements there are:

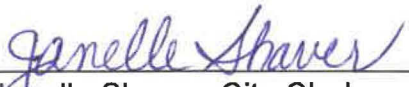
- A front yard tree requirement
- Porous area of front yard should be 100% landscaped. Sometimes hard to quantify.
- Planned residential developments do have specific landscaping plans.

Councilmember Fitzgerald received consensus to budget \$15K for the 2018 effort, and allow staff the flexibility to go up to, but not exceed, \$20K; and to approve use of enforcement tools.

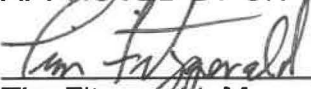
There was some discussion about using a "stick and carrot" approach. The Visual Impact Grant (commercial) is available from the Wheat Ridge Business District.

5. Elected Officials' Report(s) none

ADJOURNMENT The Study Session adjourned at 9:40 p.m.


Janelle Shaver, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON March 26, 2018


Tim Fitzgerald, Mayor pro tem