

**STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting**

March 21, 2022

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

This meeting was conducted both as a virtual meeting and hybrid, where some members of the Council or City staff were physically present at the Municipal building, and some members of the public attended in person as well. A quorum of members (eight) of Council were present in Council Chambers for this session.

Mayor Starker welcomed the Council, other elected officials, staff and interested citizens.

Mayor Starker also explained the virtual/hybrid meeting format, how citizens will have the opportunity to be heard, and the procedures and policies to be followed.

Council members present Scott Ohm, Amanda Weaver, Judy Hutchinson, Corey Stites, Valerie Nosler Beck (virtually), Janece Hoppe, Leah Dozeman, and Rachel Hultin.

Also, present: Rep. Monica Duran; Senator Jessie Danielson; Meghan Dollar, CML; City Manager Patrick Goff; City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; City Attorney, Gerald Dahl; Director of Administration, Allison Scheck; Chief of Police, Chris Murtha; Division Chief, Jim Lorentz; Commander Jon Picket and Commander Lucas Hunt, WR Police Department; Assistant to the City Manager, Marianne Schilling; Colorado Municipal League Legislative Advocacy Managers Meghan Dollar and Meghan MacKillop, interested citizens and guests.

Citizen's Right to Speak

No one came forward to speak.

Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:

Citizens may visit the Wheat Ridge Speaks website and enter written comments of up to 1,000 words on any Council agenda item. The deadline for citizens to submit comments is 12:00 Noon Mountain Time on the day of a Council session so that Council members, other elected officials and City Staff have time to review the comments before the meeting on Monday evening.

The City Clerk's Office transcribes those Wheat Ridge Speaks comments into these minutes, placing each comment along with the record for that agenda item.

No comments appear in WR Speaks related to this session.

1. 2022 Colorado Legislative Update

Discussion of this item began at approximately 6:33 pm

Issue

The Legislative Update is an opportunity for the City's elected officials and staff to discuss legislative priorities, current legislation and Wheat Ridge positions/priorities for the 2022 session. Senator Jessie Danielson and Representative Monica Duran will be in attendance, and Colorado Municipal League (CML) Legislative Advocacy Manager Meghan Dollar will be available to review legislation and answer questions.

Staff Reports

Ms. Schilling described the agenda and the discussion of Priority Legislative Issues, including the CML Box Score of Bills, Bill list and 2022 with Legislative priorities by Meghan Dollar and Meghan MacKillop from CML discussed several bills under consideration, touching upon a variety of issues, including:

- Tiny houses and affordable housing
- Municipal courts
- People experiencing homelessness
- Sexual harassment
- Employment law and discrimination
- Behavioral health
- Open meetings, open records
- Criminal justice and police conduct
- Juvenile justice
- Sales and use taxes
- Centralized statewide business license agency,

among other subjects that representatives and state senators have introduced. Ms. Dollar listed and emphasized bills of interest to municipalities introduced in the first month of this legislative session. She discussed funding for transportation at length, and bills that have been introduced or will be introduced soon.

Rep. Duran discussed several bills of particular importance that she is working to get passed, regarding safety and security of election staff and workers; Hero's' Pay, a bill to compensate front line workers (including first responders, grocery store staff, ...) with a onetime stipend.

Sen. Danielson also discussed several bills on which she is working, related to First Nations/Indigenous Peoples, Safe wildlife crossing and motorists, and the safety and well-being of senior citizens.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, engaging in discussion with CML's staff, and Rep. Monica Duran.

Chief Murtha thanked Sen. Danielson and Rep. Duran for their time and interest. Chief Murtha commented on several legislative issues, including the rights of convicted felons, especially drug dealers, to carry firearms (Senate bill 1257) and opined that law enforcement officers are also first line heroes as well.

Judge Randall commented on six bills impacting municipal courts, all of which he opined need revisions. He gave specific examples in terms of juvenile justice and sealing of court records.

Councilmembers thanked both staff and Ms. Dollar for their briefings and for their presentation, and Rep. Duran and Senator Danielson for her time and contributions to the discussion.

CM Nosler Beck excused herself following the discussion of this Item 1.

2. Police Department Telephone Reporting Unit

Discussion of this item began at approximately 7:54 pm

Issue

To improve the Wheat Ridge Police Department's response to emergent calls for service, the organization assigns sworn police officers to a newly formed Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU). The practice of using officers in this capacity has improved the department's ability to respond to reports of criminal activity in the City of Wheat Ridge.

Staff Reports

Commander Lucas Hunt and Chief Murtha presented to Council a summary of the recent work of the TRU. They recounted the experience to date with the TRU and needs going forward.

Cmdr. Hunt asked for guidance from Council on TRU going forward, calls for service generally and specially how TRU helps shift call responses that are non-emergency, non-violent calls and free patrol resources to handle more of those kinds of urgent and public safety calls for service.

Cmdr. Hunt also discussed the budget impact and service improvements that would result if we use civilian TRU service staff; currently sworn officers on limited duty take these calls.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Every councilmember who commented on TRU expressed their support for the proposed change in staffing TRU with well-trained civilian staff to answer the TRU calls for service.

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including:

1. How much time the proposed change would free up for sworn officers?

2. What impact the proposed changes would have on officer retention and department morale?
3. How will TRU dovetail with Jeff Comm (the consolidated municipal emergency calling service across Jefferson County)?
4. Will this new process impact the availability of officers to speak with citizens face to face?
5. Will this approach allow us to hire retired or other experienced law enforcement officers to provide better, faster and more effective service?
6. If a citizen wants to upload photos, audio, or video recordings to help establish the need for a call for service?

Chief Murtha and Cmdr. Hunt gave detailed and informative answers.

Mayor Starker proposed a consensus to bring forward an action to Council to move forward with TRU.

Consensus attained.

3. Staff Report(s)

Discussion began at 8:13 pm,

Mr. Goff commented on how the City can use Federal CoVid recovery dollars to support crime prevention.

Mr. Goff also responded to a story aired last week on 9News, and the slant the reporters took. The City was and is already working on the solutions to the issues the TV report raised. This will be a long-term process, and staff may come to Council for supplemental budget dollars.

Mr. Goff also commented on using some of our ARPA funds to hire a second, full-time homeless navigator due to the heavy workload.

He and Chief Murtha also discussed next steps with the new hotel licensing process and the cooperation (or lack of it) among hoteliers to resolve the issues involved, and the mileposts on the calendar. Chief Murtha commented that currently several of our hotels are uncooperative and resisting compliance. Mr. Goff indicated that staff would return to Council later this spring with information to discuss the deadline for compliance with our new hotel, motel and extended stay licensing and operating ordinances.

4. Elected Officials' Report(s)

City Clerk Kirkpatrick stated that there are still three openings on the Boards and Commissions: Liquor Authority DI, Parks and Recreation DIV, and the Board of Adjustments at large positions. The application can be found on the city website at ci.wheatridge.co.us/Boards-Commissions and for more information may call Stephanie Pomponio at 303-235-2977

CM Hultin commented on the recent delegation trip to the Municipal League in Washington. They met with Representative Perlmutter and Senators Bennet and Bennet, who were welcoming and supportive. Our delegation asked for funding to support several projects in the City.

CM Ohm echoed CM Hultin's comments and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity because he made important networking connections and learned a great deal of new information. He visited New Image Brewing recently and enjoyed meeting the business owner.

CM Dozeman also enjoyed visiting the new brewery as well. She attended the Yak and Yeti grand opening event last week and both she and her children greatly enjoyed the food. New business owners and those thinking of opening a business have a lot of resources available to help them.

CM Hutchinson asked for an update on how the implementation of the Noise Ordinance is going. Last weekend she could hear and even feel vibrations from an amplified sound event nearly a mile away from her home. Mr. Goff discussed to the specific incident report and how WR PD responded.

The Mayor commented on the Coffee with the Mayor on March 12, which he opined was a very successful event. Today he attended the groundbreaking for the I-70 and 38th Avenue bridge with Federal lawmakers and other dignitaries.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:43 PM.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON March 28, 2022.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Rachel Hultin, Mayor Pro Tem