

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting
May 15, 2023

Mayor 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, guests and interested citizens.

The Mayor 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: Amanda Weaver, Scott Ohm, Judy Hutchinson, Janeece Hoppe, Korey Stites, Leah Dozeman, and Valerie Nosler Beck.

CM Rachel Hultin excused herself.

Also present: City Attorney Gerald Dahl, City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick, City Manager Patrick Goff; Director of Community Development, Lauran Mikulak, Director of Public Works, Maria D'Andrea; Civil Engineer, Jordan Jefferies, Senior Planner, Engineering Manager, Steve Nguyen; Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, Ashley Holland; other staff and interested residents.

Public's Right to Speak

None tonight.

Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:

Members of the public 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 the public 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 appeared in Wheat Ridge Speaks for this session of Council.

1. Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan Update (NTMP)

Issue

The City has operated the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) since the mid-1990s with the primary goal of implementing traffic calming measures on neighborhood streets. Two topics related to the NTMP are to be discussed:

1. A proposed redesign of the NTMP program, and
2. An update on how to deploy NTMP funds near Prospect Valley and Stevens Elementary Schools as previously directed by City Council.

Staff Reports

Civil Engineer, Jordan Jefferies provided an update and background on the item where the NTMP is historically focused on midblock speed control and is designed to allow residents to bring safety concerns to the City's attention. The NTMP is not designed to address missing infrastructure, such as missing sidewalks. A discussion of the City's sidewalk gaps and approach to infrastructure investments is a future agenda item..

When the NTMP started in July 1997, the City had seven different street classifications, and the three types of local streets were eligible for the NTMP. An engineering staff person was fully dedicated to the administration of the NTMP. The program was modified slightly in 2002 and suspended entirely in 2009/2010 because of the recession and associated budget cuts. The NTMP was reinstated in 2014 as the program we know today.

Since implementation of the 2014 program, residents have enrolled 53 segments in the NTMP. Many of these segments were unable to meet the approval threshold or didn't qualify for improvements because there was no objective speeding issue; however, residents were successful in obtaining approval to install physical traffic-calming improvements on 16 segments from 2014 to 2022.

Other items spoken about included:

- Current Process
- Lessons Learned
- Reevaluation of the NTMP
- Redesigned NTMP
- Revised Process
- Approval Process
- Predictable Annual Timeline

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

- Several CM thanked Mr. Jefferies for his time and the update presentation.
- CM asked detailed questions about City policy. How many projects will be fundable and manageable per year? How can we speed up the process and make input more accessible to all residents, including those who live in housing other than the traditional single-family home? How will the petition process work going forward?
- Another CM question concerned the frequently observed high speed traffic on our major east- west thoroughfares. Speeds on 32nd Ave, 38th Ave, and 44th

Avenue are often dangerously high. What can we do to reduce speeding on these major arteries other than traffic calming humps and bumps?

- Ms. Mikulak recommended more traffic flow counting and speed measurement to better identify locations needing speeding control or traffic calming measures.
- A discussion of the timeline from identifying a need to construction of traffic calming followed.
- CM also asked what will happen when some residents are opposed to a new speed hump and the engineers believe it makes sense.
- This issue is something that residents bring to CM attention frequently.
- What happens if there are apartment buildings on a block? How will we ensure input from apartment residents as well as nearby single-family and duplex or triplex homes?
- Using the traffic trailer, with speed sign, is a good idea.
- How will we spread the word to residents across the City when we are ready to roll out the redesigned NTMP?
- CM asked detailed questions about how residents' input will be gathered going forward. CM thought that a 50% desire among neighborhood to have speed controls is too low; perhaps a supermajority of 2/3 or 3/4 of the impacted residents.

CM Hoppe proposed a consensus to direct staff to proceed with the redesigned NTMP program, with more than a minimum 50% of nearby residents required for approval.

Consensus attained

Staff also responded to City Council's request for Staff to take a proactive approach in identifying safe routes to schools, particularly to Prospect Valley and Stevens Elementary Schools, which will see an influx of students based on the school district's closure decisions.

Where staff is focusing primarily on safe routes for students from Kullerstrand Elementary School ("Kullerstrand") who will now be attending Prospect Valley Elementary School ("Prospect Valley") and from Wilmore-Davis Elementary School ("Wilmore-Davis") who will be attending Stevens Elementary School ("Stevens").

Due to a focus on schools in the early years of the NTMP many areas immediately adjacent to schools have already been treated with traffic-calming features due to a focus on schools in the early years of the NTMP. Additionally, the streets immediately adjacent to Prospect Valley and Stevens have adequate sidewalks. However, similarly robust infrastructure for pedestrian safety is typically not present beyond a block or two radius around the school.

In order to determine probable walking routes for the new school boundaries, Kullerstrand/Prospect Valley and Wilmore-Davis/Stevens, staff reviewed and cataloged existing traffic and pedestrian infrastructure including traffic signals, flashing beacons, radar speed signs, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), and school speed zones.

Summarized and spoken about were a series of improvements that were organized into three classifications:

- Immediate improvements which can be achieved before the start of the 23/24 school year to help make existing conditions safer;
- Near term solutions that can address connectivity gaps in the next 2 to 3 years; and
- Long term investments that provide missing infrastructure

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

- Several CM thanked Mr. Jefferies for his time and the update. They also expressed their support for the proposed efforts to ensure students safely arrive at school and safely return home.
- This discussion focused first on the Kullerstrand to Prospect Valley transition and then on the Wilmore-Davis to Stevens migration.
- Another CM question concerned the flood water flows and how those will impact plans for children to walk to school.
- Shall we use a similar process to the redesigned NTMP efforts to gather residents' input on whether to construct sidewalks along side streets? Some neighborhoods are split on whether to add sidewalks or want to keep the rural environment with no sidewalks.
- Flashing crosswalk signals are a help. Can we also look at additional signage or other warnings for drivers to alert them to the child pedestrians in critical morning and afternoon periods during the school year?
- How many of our kids will have the option of school bus service? At present, there is no information; perhaps we will need to adapt our plans once we have more data. We may need to look at safe routes to bus stops where relevant.
- A lot of parents and kids are very worried about these school transitions and student safety. We need to continue watching.

MPT Stites proposed a consensus to direct staff to proceed with the immediate improvements to be funded using NTMP dollars that were earmarked for improvements near schools.

Consensus attained

2. Staff Report(s)

Mr. Goff asked Ms. D'Andrea for an update on a flooding incident near 44th Ave and Miller yesterday. Overflow was escaping a settling basin on its way to the waste water

systems. Raw sewage was running into Clear Creek, so the City deployed all available resources to manage and mitigate the situation. Ms. D'Andrea reported on the blockages in the system outflow lines and how those were removed. The remaining overflow will be removed with a vacuum and the entire area will be treated with lime. Later the top layer of grass and soil will be scraped, removed and the area recondition and re-seeded.

Foothills Regional Housing contacted us last week when they found an opportunity to acquire a 24-unit apartment building. Foothills can purchase the building for much less than the cost of building a similar facility. They have asked if the City has any funding available to participate in the cost of that purchase. Mr. Goff recommended committing \$400,000 to help Foothills with this acquisition. He also explained who would be eligible to rent there. If the City participates with funding we would have first right of refusal to use 12 of the 24 units for our emergency housing use. This is a rare and unusually good opportunity.

Elected Officials' Report(s)

CM Nosler Beck updated the Council on recent Jeffco School Board meetings to address further school closures at the secondary level. The Board has indicated that they will listen to concerns of local communities and municipalities during this process. More schools are likely to close, and we need to continue to monitor, attend and participate to ensure that our voices are heard for the residents of Wheat Ridge.

CM Weaver asked all to take care when driving near storm water culverts and pipes because farmers are clearing their drainpipes.

CM Dozeman announced that there are several events forthcoming that are listed on the City calendar. For instance, dogs and cats can get vaccines at Anderson Park. Lots going on in District IV this spring and summer.

Mayor Pro-Tem Stites thanked the Mayor for asking him to take the lead at Coffee for the Mayor, which MPT Stites found interesting and informative. Remember: if you can find it in Wheat Ridge, buy it in Wheat Ridge.


ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:26 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON May 22, 2023.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Korey Stites, Mayor Pro-Tem