

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting
June 5, 2023

Mayor Starker called the Study Session to order at 6:31 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 Scott Ohm, Judy Hutchinson, Korey Stites, and Rachel Hultin.

Councilmembers Janeece Hoppe, Amanda Weaver, Valerie Nosler Beck, and Leah Dozeman excused themselves due to illness, family obligations or both.

Also present: City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick, City Manager Patrick Goff; Deputy City Manager Allison Scheck; Director of Community Development, Lauran Mikulak; Parks and Recreation Director, Karen A. O'Donnell; Recreation Manager Susan Anderson; Senior Planner, Stephanie Stevens; Sustainability Coordinator, Mary Hester; Joy Op, Sustainable Wheat Ridge Committee, and one interested resident.

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. Sustainable Wheat Ridge Update

Issue

The Sustainable Wheat Ridge (SWR) committee and staff requested to present an update to Council on current projects, progress made towards the Sustainability Action Plan, and other sustainability updates in the City. Staff and SWR members will provide an update to City Council regarding SWR's recent accomplishments and anticipated areas of focus throughout 2023.

Staff Reports

Assistant City Manager, Marianne Schilling presented the background on the issue where since the inception in 2017 by Mayor Joyce Jay and Council the SWR has been working to implement the Action Plan, educate the public and promote sustainability opportunities within the community, and continues to advise the City on best practices and opportunities.

She introduced Sustainability Coordinator, Mary Hester who spoke on items that included the accomplishments over the past two years:

- Hosting several community events
- Publishing the City's first Sustainability Newsletter
- Initiated the annual Green Business Award
- Passing of an ordinance to explicitly allow residential composting
- Created an EV charging location strategy

Other Highlights included:

- Garden in A Box - offered through Resource Central
- Sustainable Neighborhoods - Applewood Villages, Fruitdale, Panorama Park, and Paramount Heights
- Mayor's Monarch Pledge - offered through the National Wildlife Federation
- Community Events - Fall Yard Waste, Paint Recycling, Electronic Waste Recycling Events

Ms. Hester also relayed that the Sustainable Wheat Ridge and staff recognize that there has been substantial progress made on the Action Plan since implementation began in 2018. As of the February 2021 update to Council, 51% of the plan was in progress or completed, and currently 64% of the plan is now in-motion or already completed, with 32% of the identified goals being fully completed.

The Sustainable Wheat Ridge Committee has identified six focus areas for 2023:

1. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
2. Solar
3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction.
4. Sustainability Action Plan Update
5. Green Business.

6. Responsible Waste Management.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

- Several CM and Mayor Starker thanked Staff for their hard work that yielded the report we heard tonight. The report was well formatted and easy to read yet full of essential ideas and recommendations.
- CM Hultin, who attends meetings and events sponsored by the program, opined that it is impossible to overestimate the enthusiasm and commitment to sustainability among those staff and volunteers working so hard. She also noted that many, many residents, including relatively new arrivals, have gotten directly involved as volunteers.
- MPT Stites echoed others' laudatory comments and expressed his amazement and high level of satisfaction with progress in sustainability through their efforts.
- CM asked detailed questions about technicalities and how to achieve the City's objectives. A lengthy discussion among staff and CM addressed several of these questions.
- Several questions concerned how to implement specific recommendations,

2. Waterwise landscaping regulations and programs

Issue

The purpose of this study session is to confirm policy direction and gauge Council's level of interest related to waterwise landscaping regulations and programs for privately owned properties. This issue will also discuss the City's role in supporting and modeling waterwise practices and the topics are organized into five sections:

1. Background on the City's water source and waterwise principles
2. A summary of peer community approaches
3. A discussion and policy questions related to waterwise regulations
4. A summary and discussion related to waterwise programs
5. A summary of the current state of Wheat Ridge waterwise modeling

Staff Reports

Senior Planner Stephanie Stevens, Sustainability Coordinator Mary Hester, along with Landscape Planner Janet Gassman presented on the issue and summarized the water background where historically, it has been a state-level responsibility to figure out how to share Colorado River water, but the failure of seven states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming) to reach an agreement on water reductions could place the responsibility on the federal government.

Years of continuous drought coupled with local area growth and development have raised awareness and concerns about the availability and use of water in Colorado and particularly the Front Range. Water levels of the Colorado River and its two reservoirs, Lake Mead and Lake Powell, have reached record lows in recent years, triggering a series of water shortage declarations by the Department of Interior.

The following topics were also touched on in an overview:

- Water Source & Cycle
- Waterwise Landscaping and Xeriscaping
- Peer Communities Overview
- Regulatory Strategies
- Code Analysis
- Irrigation – Turf, Artificial Turf, Irrigated and non-functional turf, Landscape specifications, Low-density residential requirements, etc.
- Programmatic Strategies
- Modeling Strategies

Finalizing in the next steps, staff is seeking to understand Council's level of interest related to waterwise landscaping and to confirm whether Council agrees with staff's regulatory, programmatic and modeling approaches.

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, engaging in discussion among themselves and with staff including:

- Several CM expressed their support for the staff recommendations.
- CM Ohm opined on several issues related to water conservation and the staff's recommendation. He expressed concerns about installing too many artificial turf areas because they impact the entire landscaping plan.
- CM also discussed existing irrigation requirements, nearby municipalities policies, and regulations related to using well water for watering landscaping.

The Mayor **proposed a consensus** to direct staff to bring to Council draft code changes and regulations aligned with staff's recommendations and consistent with CM comments and feedback on those recommendations.

Consensus attained.

3. Metropolitan Football Stadium District funding for youth activity programs

Issue

The City of Wheat Ridge received \$523,551 from the sale of the Denver Broncos Football Club. The funds must be used for "youth activity programs" within the Wheat Ridge community. Staff presented a variety of options to youth community members and requested feedback regarding their preferences. Based on youth feedback, staff will present recommendations for use of these funds.

Staff Reports

Parks and Recreation Director, Karen A. O'Donnell reported on the item where the City received notice from the Metropolitan Football Stadium District (MFSD), stating that the sale of the Denver Broncos Football Club triggered components of both the original legislation which created the MFSD and the lease and management agreement which ties the franchise to the taxpayer owned facility, Empower Field at Mile High, and subsequently to the counties, cities, and towns within a 7-county metro Denver boundary.

The \$4.65 billion sale of the Broncos franchise resulted in a "sharing amount" of just over \$41 million. The MFSD Board elected to distribute these funds proportionately to the counties, cities, and towns in which the stadium tax was collected. The City of Wheat Ridge's proportionate percentage of tax revenue was 1.275774% or \$523,551. Recreation Manager Susan Anderson described the first option as a large, nature-themed playground designed by GameTime. If selected, this piece totaling \$384,663, will be installed at Anderson Park next to the nature play area.

Ms. Anderson then described other options to replace the existing aging playground at Anderson Park, along with proposed items for the Green on 38th, the Recreation center and also one for Anderson park. These projects range from \$110,000 to \$120,000.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

- CM asked detailed questions about several topics, engaging in discussion among themselves and with staff, who answered their questions in detail.
- CM thanked staff for their hard work on this issue, and strongly supported involving Wheat Ridge children in the process of planning how to spend these funds.
- CM asked several questions about the process for receiving, allocating and spending the windfall from the sale of the Broncos. Another question focused on the timeline for beginning to install and then use these new play areas.

Mayor Starker asked for a consensus to move forward.

Consensus attained.

4. Staff Report(s)

Mr. Goff announced

Elected Officials' Report(s)

City Clerk Kirkpatrick reported on the latest developments regarding the protestors' appeal of Judge Basso's order supporting the Clerk's Office determination that the petition submitted to refer Ord 1744 regarding ADU in Wheat Ridge. He also revealed plans to make for more complete presentation to Council at an upcoming meeting.

CM Hutchinson noted a report in the Denver Post that a sports activity business focusing on pickleball courts and other indoor sports, with food, drinks and seating areas.

CM Hultin and CM Ohm held a District II meeting in the cold rain last Saturday. She also visited the Happiness Gardens and was delighted to see all of the activities and new plantings. She urged people who have not recently visited the Gardens to visit it soon. Gov. Polis signed a new law allowing more aggressive enforcement of speeding on our roadways.

MPT Stites attended the Golds Marketplace event last Saturday and it was a great success.

CM Ohm asked about planned openings of new businesses at Golds Marketplace. Mr. Goff gave a detailed answer. He also reported on several instances when other drivers passed him clearly exceeding the posted speed limit. He asked whether the mobile speed limit signs record data on the speed of passing vehicles so we could analyze the information. Mr. Goff replied to the questions and reported on new devices WR PD is using in high-traffic areas where there are also high complaint rates about speeding cars.

Mayor Starker thanked the staff and volunteers who came this evening to discuss three different matters. Coffee with the Mayor at Vignola's this Saturday at 9 am.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:56 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON July 24, 2023.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Korey Stites, Mayor Pro Tem