

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting
November 6, 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 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, Amanda Weaver, Leah Dozeman, Valerie Nosler Beck, and Rachel Hultin.

Also present: City Manager, Patrick Goff; City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; Deputy City Manager, Allison Scheck; Jefferson County School District, COO Jeff Gatlin; COS, Lisa Relou; other staff and interested residents.

Public's Right to Speak

Kat Martell, 6455 W. 31st. came to discuss sustainability programs and to recommend that an expansion of those efforts would improve our quality of life. She also wants to involve the Cultural Commission in projects related to agriculture as well as art and culture.

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. Update from Jefferson County School District Issue

On November 10, 2022, the Jeffco School Board voted to close sixteen elementary schools, of which, there served Wheat Ridge students. New Classical Academy at Vivian was closed and has consolidated with Stober. Wilmore-Davis has closed and has

consolidated with Stevens. Kullerstrand has closed and has consolidated with Prospect Valley. Jeff Gatlin, Chief Operating Officer, and Lisa Relou, Chief of Staff, from the Jefferson County School District, will provide an update to City Council concerning the disposition of the closed schools at the November 6th study session.

This item is intended to be informational only. Therefore, there are no specific recommendations from staff and no specific direction requested of Council.

Staff Reports

Jeff Gatlin, Chief Operating Officer, and Lisa Relou, Chief of Staff, from the Jefferson County School District, provided an update to City Council concerning the disposition of the closed schools.

Mr. Gatlin reminded everyone of the items that required these actions, which included but was not limited to:

- JeffCo residents have grown by 55,854 but school-aged children has declined by more than 29,000.
- The District, for a multitude of reasons, has lost more than 5,000 students between 2019-2022.
- Finances and operation challenges need to be addressed.

Other items included the following topics:

- Regional Opportunities for Thriving Schools
- Property Disposition Process
- Community Engagement Priorities
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Target times for Solicitation

CM had comments and questions:

Several CM and the Mayor thanked Mr. Gatlin and Ms. Relou for the informative presentation.

CM engaged in a discussion and exchange of questions and proposals with the representatives from Jefferson County Schools.

CM asked a number of questions about the future uses of the closed elementary schools. The discussion focused on the process of declaring properties surplus, and how a municipality might obtain ownership of one of those properties.

CM also asked whether the closed schools might be held by Jeffco Schools in reserve for the potential need of more classrooms in the event our population of school age children increases.

CM also opined that the lack of communication and community engagement was a serious problem earlier this year. How has the feedback on those events and lack of community involvement been received by the school administration?

CM engaged in a detailed discussion about the future prospects of the City acquiring a closed school property. CM also discussed where the funds would go a school in WR that has closed is sold.

The school representatives also discussed the proposed improvements to Wheat Ridge High School, to renovate several parts of the facility that have not been upgraded in 50 years.

3. Staff Report(s)

Mr. Goff announced that our grant application for improvements in The Green has received favorable response, an \$850,000 grant!

4. Elected Officials' Report(s)

City Clerk Kirkpatrick announced an open seat in District III on the Cultural Commission where applications should be received by November 19, and he reminded everyone to make sure they got out and voted. Election day is tomorrow with the ballot boxes and voter service polling centers open from 7am-7pm, and residents may register to vote and cast a ballot as late as 7:00 pm, if they are in line to vote at 7:00 pm.

CM Hultin reported on progress and new opportunities at Happiness Gardens.

MPT Stites reported on an event he attended.

CM Weaver noted that her goat herd makes great garden compost.

CM Nosler Beck commented on the school district presentation.

CM Dozeman reminded us of the Turkey Trot; registration ends on November 15.

CM Ohm thanked the staff for all of their hard work, and thanks to his neighbors for their engagement with the City.

CM Hutchinson thanked staff for their hard work after the last snowfall.

Mayor Starker recognized and thanked the speakers from the school district. Saturday, November 11 is the next Coffee with the Mayor.

ADJOURNMENT to Special City Council Meeting

The Study Session adjourned at 7:45 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON December 11, 2023.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk

Korey Stites

Korey Stites, Mayor Pro Tem