

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

**October 4, 2021**

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

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. Seven members of Council were present in Council Chambers for this session as Councilmember Urban was excused

Mayor Starker welcomed the Council, other elected officials, staff, and interested Members of the Public.

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

Council members present Amanda Weaver, Judy Hutchinson, Janeece Hoppe, Korey Stites, Leah Dozeman, Valerie Nosler Beck, and Rachel Hultin.

Also, present: City Treasurer, Chris Miller; Director of Parks and Recreation, Karen O'Donnell; Director of Community Development, Ken Johnstone; Planning Manager, Lauren Mikulak; Deputy City Clerk, Robin Eaton, interested Members of the Public and guests.

**Public's Right to Speak**

None one presented to speak

**Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:**

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. 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.

**1. Staff Report(s) –**

a) Trees for Community Recovery

Discussion of this item began at approximately 6:34 pm

**Please note** that this item was received after the agenda packet was sent out; a copy of the letter will be attached to the draft minutes when distributed.

Karen O'Donnell, Parks and Recreation Director, spoke regarding a letter that was received by a group that is trying to gain support from local government officials to help save the urban forests and hopefully expand it as well.

She is looking to get a consensus to add the City of Wheat Ridge to the letter, showing their support.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Member Weaver referenced the time frame of the item being submitted and asked if the letter could be made public at a future date so that people could see it in its entirety. She also asked by definition if the City of Wheat Ridge qualifies as an urban forest or a tree canopy.

Member Hultin requested the organization's contact information be made available, and she is enthusiastic to support the consensus. That website address for them is located at <https://www.trees4community.com/>

The consensus was attained to move the letter forward

#### **b) Board and Commission Recreation Benefits**

Discussion of this item began at approximately 6:38 pm

#### **Issue**

City Council has requested that the City offer recreation benefits to current and future members of all City Boards and Commissions. The Parks and Recreation Department was tasked with presenting City Council with a proposal.

#### **Staff Reports**

Karen O'Donnell, Director of Parks and Recreation, proposed updating Administrative Policy No. 601-30 (City-wide Employee Recreation Benefits) to include active Board and Commission members. Benefits received would include:

- Free drop-in use of the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center.
- Free drop-in use of the Wheat Ridge Outdoor Pool at Anderson Park

Board and Commission members will need to fill out a Facility Pass Request form to receive these benefits as a volunteer appreciation gift. This benefit is available to individuals actively serving and does not include family members

Councilmembers had questions and comments to include:

- Would other committees and task forces be included now or at a later date?
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- Will taxes need to be paid on the benefits?
- Explore adding those other groups to see how burdensome it would be to the City.
- It would be great to provide tangible benefits to all of the city volunteers.
- Determine and run reports to see the usage by members.
- Hope to approve participation to recruit new members.

Councilmember Hoppe proposed a consensus to move the benefits package forward and include the task forces and committees.

**Consensus attained.**

## 2. Land Acknowledgement

Discussion of this item began at approximately 6:48 pm

### **Issue**

Councilmembers Hoppe and Nosler-Beck requested a study session to discuss with the Mayor and City Council the establishment of a land acknowledgment program for the City of Wheat Ridge.

They described that it is an effort to recognize the Indigenous past, present, and future of a particular location and to understand our place within that relationship. Usually, land acknowledgments take the form of written and/or verbal statements. It's becoming more and more common to see land acknowledgments delivered at conferences, community gatherings, places of worship, concerts and festivals, etc.

### **Staff Reports**

Karen O'Donnell, Director of Parks and Recreation, spoke on several items that included:

- Developing a land acknowledgment statement for the City of Wheat Ridge through a collaborative process
- Connecting work to related projects within the Parks & Recreation Department
- Incorporating land acknowledgment through park signage, educational programs, and native plantings

Councilmembers had questions and comments, to which staff gave detailed responses:

- Would it be possible to determine when the specific tribes were in the area and who those would have been back then?
- Explain what fundraisers for land taxes are.
- This is an item for what the City can do and is not the only item that the community can do in land acknowledgment or recognition plans.

Consensus was attained to provide direction to the Parks & Recreation Department to move forward with developing a land acknowledgment statement and incorporating it into Department programs and practices.

### **3. Let's Talk Resident Engagement Program Update**

Discussion began at 7:06 pm,

#### **Issue**

The Let's Talk Resident Engagement Program stems from the 2019 Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy (NRS) Update. The purpose of this study session agenda item is to:

1. Share detailed reports from the recently completed Applewood and Leppla Manor resident engagement "blitzes"; and
2. Provide an update on the Let's Talk Program and Work Plan following the completion of neighborhoods three and four of ten.

#### **Staff Reports**

Community Development Director Kenneth Johnstone, Senior Neighborhood Planner, Jeff Hirt, and Ashley Holland gave Council the background of the Engagement Program launched just over a year ago and has now completed engagement "blitzes" in four of ten neighborhoods

They spoke on the work plan reflecting the action items the residents have weighed in on to date through the program from rounds one and two of surveys. The list of work plan items is noteworthy and reflects Blitz Two's input and is new since City Council's last program update in April 2021.

#### **New and Notable Program Work Plan Items:**

- *38<sup>th</sup> Avenue (West) Improvements* - Applewood resident blitz respondents ranked this #1 of 10 potential action items, with 81% in support.
- *Youngfield Corridor Improvements* – Applewood resident blitz respondents, ranked this #2 of 10 potential action items, with 78% in support.
- *44<sup>th</sup> Avenue (East) Targeted Improvements* – Leppla Manor residents ranked this #1 of 9 potential action items, with 81% in support.
- *Otis Street Clear Creek Trailhead Improvements* - Leppla Manor residents ranked this #3 of 9 potential action items, with 75% in support.

Also given were updates on several action items from the work plan that originated or were bolstered from the program's first two neighborhood blitzes and have been advanced since the last Council update in 2021. These include:

- Improved Communications on Projects with Potential Neighborhood Impacts
- 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue in East Wheat Ridge
- Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP)
- Neighborhood Cleanup Days (TLC events)
- 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue (East)

Where the original program goal was to cover the entire City (divided into ten neighborhoods) in about two years, two neighborhoods at a time, the "two-neighborhood" approach is working, but the blitzes are taking slightly longer than originally anticipated. The program is still on track to cover the whole City by early to mid-2023.

The next two Let's Talk neighborhoods will be Fruitdale and Anderson Park, which were selected for the next blitz primarily because Fruitdale and Anderson Park would represent the first engagement blitzes for the large area of the City north of Clear Creek.

Lastly spoken about was how the city staff will evaluate how to fine-tune the Round 2 blitz engagement to tie into the corridor planning process. Public engagement for the corridor plan will benefit from the engagement of residents during the blitz.

Councilmembers had questions and comments to include but not limited to:

- Explain the re-zoning of 38<sup>th</sup> Ave and Miller.
- It's great to engage the community and listen to what is important to them.
- Thanks to the group and the Members of the Public that responded and participated in the program.
- Explain the prioritization from the different rounds and being able to disseminate the data.
- Describe the alternative ways to participate in these programs if not done electronically, and are there alternative language measures in place

Mayor Starker thanked the group for "a great presentation as well as the great work that they are doing."

#### **4. Elected Officials' Report(s)**

Discussion of this item began at approximately 7:45 pm.

Councilmember Hoppe posed questions concerning city facilities surveys to what our needs are and if we're meeting those needs or is it something we need to look at doing. Mr. Johnstone responded that the EMT needs a better comprehensive master plan, as there have been many changes in the past years since the last one. He thinks it means a lot of staff involvement and maybe a consultant to come in and get the task done.

Councilmember Hutchinson spoke on a missing person report for an elderly lady and wondered if anyone else had received it.

Councilmember Hultin wanted to "thank everyone who came out to her District II meeting recently, especially Kate Benning, the communication consultant for the Wadsworth Improvement Project. She stated that Regenerate Wheat Ridge would have their final community program on Wednesday at the Happiness Garden."

Councilmember Weaver asked where people can report issues with the new short-term rentals (STR) which Councilmember Hultin responded that there is information posted on the FAQ section of the city website and for other issues not generally related to STR's, they can contact WRPD Code enforcement at 303-235- 2926. For emergencies, always call 911.

Also, Councilmember Weaver wanted Mr. Johnstone to know that she has received great feedback from people for the Public Works department working on speed bumps and controlling speed in the neighborhoods.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Study Session adjourned at 7:54 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON October 25, 2021.



Robin Eaton, Deputy City Clerk



Janeece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem