

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY
July 13, 2020

Meeting Convened: 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium

Meeting Adjourned: 8:07 p.m.

City Councilmembers present: Kraig Andrews, Chuck McDaniel, Phyllis Norris, Phil Pe'a, Anna Stout, and Mayor Duke Wortmann.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Caton, City Attorney John Shaver, Principal Planner David Thornton, Associate Planner Jace Hochwalt, Management Analyst Johnny McFarland, Senior Assistant to the City Manager Greg LeBlanc, Communication Specialist Kevin Keane, and City Clerk Wanda Winkelmann.

Mayor Wortmann called the meeting to order.

Agenda Topic 1. Discussion Topics

a. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Council Workshop

Mr. Sherbenou introduced the consultant teams from GreenPlay LLC and Barker Rinker Seacat. This workshop begins the series of public meetings that will include engaging with the PROS Advisory Committee, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, focus groups, public partners, business leaders and others.

Pat O'Toole with GreenPlay LLC is looking for Council feedback. The project will take approximately ten months and will include capital projects, 10-year vision, park development polices, land dedication, fee-in-lieu, open spaces management plan, acquisition and uses. Additionally, there will be an online engagement tool for public participation, a random sample mail survey to 4,000 households, and online surveys.

Discussion included items that Council would like the consultants to be aware of, including being geographically challenged and engaging with different groups such as the senior population, Spanish speaking population, and youth. Mr. O'Toole asked several questions, including: what recreational facilities are needed, what needs to be repaired? Recreation center with indoor amenities, courts, and work out facilities. Concern was expressed about an existing leaking pool. What additional recreational programs are needed? It was suggested that the consultants engage with the group that led the prior recreation center effort. Other suggested amenities include an indoor ice arena, pickle ball courts, and more soccer fields.

Mr. O'Toole reviewed the Issues and Opportunities Report, including riverfront open space and access, park access and facility needs, public lands and areas of natural environment, sustainability and resiliency. Grand Junction's need to have amenities that are accessible; what barriers need to be removed? Additional partnerships and collaboration with the school district and Mesa County will help remove barriers.

Discussion ensued regarding the implementation of the plan and funding mechanisms.

b. Tobacco & Vaping Discussion

City Manager Caton noted that Jodi Radke with the Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids would provide tonight's presentation virtually. Ms. Radke provided statistics regarding tobacco and e-cigarette use in Mesa County and across the state. She discussed the benefits of tobacco tax increases: for every 10% increase in tax, there is a decline in use rates by 3-5%. The cost of smoking-related illnesses is \$326 billion per year nationwide. \$1.89 billion is spent annually in Colorado for smoking-related healthcare costs, of which Medicaid pays \$386.3 million.

Discussion ensued regarding how cigarette prices/taxes impact low income residents, other health costs of tobacco use, using cigarette taxes for health-related programs and smoking cessation programs, retailers locking tobacco products behind counters, policy considerations that would lower tobacco use, how this policy is directed to break the cycle and interrupt the increase of young smokers, and use of possible tax revenues for education and parks and recreation programs.

c. Marijuana Discussion

Marijuana Enforcement Division (MED) Agent Rachelle Redmond was present to discuss medical and retail marijuana in Colorado. Ms. Redmond reviewed the history in Grand Junction and the legislative actions that legalized marijuana use. She noted that licensing marijuana is so complicated because it is an illegal substance under Federal law with limited Federal oversight and the focus on public safety. In Colorado, a dual license is required, which means an application must receive local and state approval. Industrial hemp cultivations are regulated by the Department of Agriculture. One hundred eight municipalities in Colorado have opted in to legalize marijuana businesses, and all persons associated with the industry are required to be licensed (owners, managers, employees, etc.).

Discussion ensued about underage marijuana usage, demographics of users, compliance checks, where State tax revenues are spent, average tax rate for municipalities, marijuana as a gateway drug, testing requirements for consumer safety, the regulation of cultivated products, severe fine schedules for infractions, and the possibility of a ballot question regarding marijuana in April 2021.

Support was expressed for additional information and to consider holding a meeting devoted to the topic of marijuana to receive public input and hold a dialogue. A larger facility may be necessary to ensure social distancing requirements can be met.

Agenda Topic 2. City Council Communication

For the City Council meeting on Wednesday, it was noted that the Auditorium would have limited seating to allow for social distancing and two over-flow areas would be available to accommodate additional attendees.

A conversation was held about the time and location for Wednesday pre-meetings. Support was expressed to have the pre-meeting start at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium.

It was noted that it can be confusing for the public to know which items on the agenda can receive public comment. All items on the Discussion Agenda will allow public comment.

The topic of engaging members of the public who are Spanish-speaking arose – how is the City going to communicate with these members?

It was requested that an update on the Dos Rios bonds be provided at the meeting on Wednesday.

A discussion was held on principles of decorum for meeting attendees to ensure everyone feels free to speak.

Councilmember Norris noted that last year (“pre-pandemic”) City Council met in Executive Session for the evaluations of the City Manager and City Attorney. At that time support was expressed for 360-degree evaluations. Councilmember Norris recommends tabling this project until next year. Conversation ensued regarding using a different evaluation form and using goals as a measurement. Mountain States Employers Council is a helpful resource for evaluations.

Agenda Topic 3. Next Workshop Topics

Mr. Caton stated that the August 3 Workshop will cover the Patterson Road Access Control Plan.

Agenda Topic 4. Other Business

There was none.

Adjournment

The Workshop adjourned at 8:07 p.m.