

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY**  
**December 14, 2020**

**Meeting Convened:** 5:30 p.m. Meeting live streamed and broadcast on cable channel 191.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 9:39 p.m.

**City Councilmembers present:** Councilmembers Kraig Andrews, Chuck McDaniel, Phyllis Norris, Phil Pe'a, Anna Stout (attended virtually), Rick Taggart (attended virtually) and Mayor Duke Wortmann.

**Staff present:** City Manager Greg Caton, City Attorney John Shaver, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Principal Planner David Thornton, City Clerk Wanda Winkelmann, and Deputy City Clerk Selestina Sandoval. Attended virtually: Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou, Public Works Director Trent Prall, and Senior Assistant to the City Manager Greg LeBlanc.

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Mayor Wortmann called the meeting to order.

**Agenda Topic 1. Discussion Topics**

**a. Mesa County Economic Development First Responder Update**

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Diane Schwenke and Business Incubator Center (BIC) Executive Director Jon Maraschin provided an update on the impacts the pandemic has had on local businesses.

As part of the community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several local economic development entities have formed the Mesa County Economic Development First Responders. This group collectively works together to help facilitate the economic recovery of the community.

On May 6, 2020, the City Council approved Ordinance 4920 authorizing temporary assistance by and through an appropriation of \$540,000 to the Business Stabilization and Recovery Fund. The City's Fund, which was administered by the Business Incubator/Small Business Development Center as a Revolving Loan Fund, was to support business with a physical location in Grand Junction with expenses directly and indirectly related to forestalling foreclosure, rental assistance and temporary mitigation of other financial impacts due to COVID-19. On November 4, City Council approved \$300,000 for the creation of a COVID-19 response grant fund that is administered through the Revolving Loan Fund. Grants will be up to \$7,500 and based on certain criteria. As of December 10, a total of \$338,423 has been disbursed to 54 businesses for

an average of \$6,267.09 per business. Applications from 15 businesses were not able to be funded as they had already received significant PPP/EIDL funds or opened in 2020, which made them unable to document a decrease in revenue from 2019.

BIC has also disbursed \$414,493 in Energize Colorado Gap Fund grants (an average of \$15,000 per business) to 33 businesses in Mesa County. BIC is currently exploring the creation of a low-interest micro loan program out of its own funds to try and fill some of the gaps that existing programs were unable to accommodate.

Director Schwenke stated the Chamber has been conducting “flash polls” of the business community to learn about their circumstances. Last week the seventh poll was launched and she received 180 responses. Some trends that have emerged whereby 15% of respondents indicated their income was up, some businesses are using/have used stimulus checks, 8% have used public loans, some have experienced a change in number of employees, some businesses had had to lay off employees. When asked at the beginning of the pandemic, “How many months of operating cash do you have?” only 5% said 2 months or less; now 32% of respondents have 2 months or less of operating cash, which shows the fragility of businesses. Some predictions indicate there will be a decline in holiday sales, perhaps 10% over last year. The hospitality industry may take a year to recover.

Director Maraschin discussed business assistance and noted that owners do not want to borrow money because of future uncertainty. Discussion ensued about offering financial assistance as a grant rather than a loan, not disqualifying a business’s request for assistance if they’ve received funds in the past or have COVID-related expenses.

Director Maraschin noted the BIC is providing coaching to businesses re: COVID-related impacts, requirements for assistance, and resources.

Support was expressed for the City to help businesses through additional financial assistance. Directors Schwenke and Maraschin will meet with City Manager Caton to continue the conversation.

#### **b. Non-Profit Update and Discussion**

Community Foundation Board members Anne Wenzel and Tedi Gillespie attended the workshop to provide an update on the impacts of COVID on non-profits entities in Grand Junction.

Ms. Wenzel stated she was in front of City Council in March and April to note the increased community demands for housing and food assistance and individuals having an increase in

social/mental health needs. The City awarded the Community Foundation \$500K to serve the residents of Grand Junction and the non-profits saw lessening of demand in summer when businesses were open; however they are now seeing more impacts from individuals and families who have suffered a job loss and are showing up at the food pantry and are worried about evictions. The non-profit organizations are worried about lack of federal assistance to help fund services to combat drug addictions and domestic violence.

Ms. Wenzel noted that donations were up 20% from last year on Colorado Gives Day. The Community Foundation stands ready to assist if the GJ Strong Fund is renewed in 2021.

Conversation was held about the requirements for the non-profit grants and the possibility of expanding what the City would provide beyond basic needs, such as mental health related services. Support was expressed to invite Ms. Wenzel and Ms. Gillespie back after the first of the year to hear what is needed from the non-profit community.

Councilmember McDaniel reported on a request from Scott Aker on behalf of the non-profit entities that provide housing: 1) the need to pay \$19,000 for security at a local motel where individuals are quarantining due to COVID and 2) \$30,000 for rent relief as the moratorium on evictions will end. Councilmember McDaniel will obtain additional information to determine if the entities have the cash on hand to pay for these needs and be reimbursed later or if they need the City to fund these needs now. Additionally, these expenses may be eligible for CDBG-CV funding that will be discussed at the January 4 workshop.

### **c. Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan: Final Plan and Community Center Feasibility Study**

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan has reached the final plan phase and is ready for Council consideration and discussion. Of the four phases of the planning process, information gathering, findings presentation, preliminary plan and final plan, this is the final plan presentation. The findings presentation in October, rooted largely in the statistically valid community survey, illuminated community priorities. As has been stated all along, the community survey is the driving force in establishing priorities for the PROS Master Plan. These priorities have now been applied to specific projects and priorities with the overall goal to advance the Parks, Recreation and Open Space system and sustain and improve service to the Grand Junction Community.

The scope of work for the PROS Master Plan includes completing a feasibility study of the highest articulated need according to the community. This was clearly a community center according to the statistically valid community survey. Given the statistical validity, the results

represent the opinion of the broader community. The Council gave direction on November 30 after the preliminary plan presentation to complete the feasibility study on the community center.

Mr. Caton introduced the topic and Director Sherbenou provided additional detail.

Consultant Keri Konold with GreenPlay gave a presentation on the revisions to the draft PROS plan, which included the Lincoln Park Stadium Master Plan adoption date, outline of the previous planning process and elements leading to Lincoln Park as an optimal site for a community center, deeper description of full public process, and other items.

Discussion ensued about dog parks. Mr. Sherbenou noted that Columbine Park is being considered as a future location for a dog park.

Craig Bouch with Barker Rinker Seacat, discussed the feasibility study and provided draft plan concepts that included an ice rink, pool, teaching kitchen, walking track, and gymnasium space. Amendments to the concepts can be made to lessen the square footage of the center and therefore lessen the cost. One element of the feasibility study includes an analysis of the failure of the ballot question related to funding the community center.

It was noted that Lincoln Park is seen as a desirable location for a community center because of the existing infrastructure and developed area, the multi-use synergy, and the mature park landscaping. Moyer Pool has been rebuilt three times (1922, 1955, and 1986) and it is time for another rebuild.

Discussion ensued about the proposed plan concepts, recreation center funding and possible debt question, possible tax on marijuana businesses, additional sales tax needed, and timeline for ballot questions. Concern was expressed that there may not be enough time to develop questions for the April ballot and a November timeframe may be more realistic.

#### **d. One Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan**

Mr. Thornton presented the final changes made to the Comprehensive Plan document made by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) including City Council's request for CPAC to look at mixed-use in the Lower Downtown/Rail District area, and from comments received from the public.

In addition, Mr. Thornton noted that staff is seeking direction from Council regarding the Implementation Matrix and if Council would prefer to finalize the matrix or to use the draft

matrix as a starting point to inform the development of the next City Council Strategic Plan. Additional citizen comments were received that covered the relationship between the Comp Plan and Strategic Plan, errors in the text, minor amendments, and others.

Concern was expressed about possible changes to the plan, different population numbers shown in the graphs, and the density of transitions in certain areas. Mr. Caton stated the Plan was scheduled to be adopted in two days at the City Council meeting and, in light of the comments received this evening, suggested the next step could be additional community feedback with adoption pushed out to after the first of the year.

Mr. Ivan Geer discussed the work of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) and stated the recommendations were a result of consensus by the committee (and not staff-driven).

After discussion, support was expressed to continue with the public hearing scheduled for the City Council meeting on Wednesday when public testimony would be requested. After hearing the public comments, Council can decide to either vote on the plan or delay an adoption action until after the first of the year.

**Agenda Topic 2. City Council Communication**

There was none.

**Agenda Topic 3. Next Workshop Topics**

There was none.

**Agenda Topic 4. Other Business**

There was none.

**Adjournment**

The Workshop adjourned at 9:39 p.m.