

## GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY JULY 31, 2023

**Meeting Convened:** 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the Fire Department Training Room, 625 Ute Avenue, and live streamed via GoToWebinar.

**City Councilmembers Present:** Councilmembers Scott Beilfuss, Cody Kennedy, Jason Nguyen, Randall Reitz, Dennis Simpson, Mayor Pro Tem Abe Herman, and Mayor Anna Stout.

**Staff Present:** City Manager Greg Caton, City Attorney John Shaver, Director of Public Works Trent Prall, Director of General Services Jay Valentine, Finance Director Jodi Welch, Director of Parks and Recreation Ken Sherbenou, Recreation Superintendent Emily Krause, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, City Clerk Amy Phillips, and Deputy Clerk Janet Harrell.

### 1. Discussion Topics

#### a. Purchasing Policy Update

On January 19, 2023, City Council listened to concerns from the Western Colorado Contractors Association (WCCA) and the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce. At issue was a piece of equipment, a GOMACO concrete laydown machine, and the fact that the City is using this equipment to complete 9.2 miles of trail "in-house".

A claim was made in this meeting that City staff did not follow policy when deciding to do the self-performance of this project, specifically citing City Purchasing Policy Section 18. This Section, however, was written to guide decisions pertaining to the City divesting/privatizing an entire function of the City and not guiding decisions of self-performance.

Because of this, staff has drafted a potential self-performance policy that could be incorporated into the City's Purchasing Policy and Procedures Manual. This draft policy recognizes the importance of competitive bidding for projects. However, the City Manager may assign City employees to construct public improvements in certain situations when the estimated cost of the project is less than the amount stated in the policy. This amount will be established following discussion with City Council.

Staff is requesting an inclusion to the Purchasing Policy that will define the guidelines for City staff to self-perform certain projects.

Discussion ensued concerning whether to establish a specific numerical threshold or create broader categories like "capital projects" and "maintenance" to give staff more discretion in decision-making. Some Councilmembers expressed preference for a numerical threshold in the range of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000, while others advocated for using broader categories like "capital projects" to allow staff more flexibility. The Council recognizes the importance of having a policy in place but also acknowledges the need for further discussion and consultation with stakeholders. The idea of a sunset provision was advanced, which would mean revisiting and reevaluating the policy after a specific period to determine if any changes or adjustments are

needed. Council's goal is to strike a balance between transparency, efficiency, and responsiveness to different economic conditions and avoiding unintended consequences, such as cost escalations.

They also discussed the possibility of indexing the threshold for inflation and suggest revisiting the policy periodically to make necessary adjustments. City Manager Caton raised concerns about staff being held accountable if engineering estimates run lower than the actual cost of the finished project which has exceeded the policy threshold.

Discussion concluded with concerns regarding how to include administrative salaries and overhead costs in the bids. There was agreement that some level of overhead cost should be included, but the challenge is to determine a fair and realistic number. The goal is to find a percentage that reasonably reflects the actual administrative cost incurred for each project without artificially inflating it. The Council agreed additional discussion is need for a more thorough examination to ensure a fair inclusion of administrative costs in the bids.

**b. Emerson Skate Park**

The City has hired Team Pain, a renowned designer with over 300 highly successful skate parks throughout the country, to develop a concept design and associated cost estimates for a skate park as the central feature in a fully renovated Emerson Park. The design was presented to City Council to show what a potential skate park at Emerson Park would look like, how it would function and the associated costs. The primary project objectives are two-fold; reactivation of an antiquated park that provides minimal public benefit currently, and a way to more effectively meet the needs of a user group who has seen minimal improvement to facilities in a couple of decades.

As one of the City's four original historic parks, Emerson has a long history in the community. Beyond the benefit of a beautiful mature tree canopy, there is currently minimal use of Emerson Park for public recreation purposes. There is a large playground structure which receives no use and a restroom facility that is the site of frequent vandalism and other activities that results in a high amount of maintenance work for City staff.

Starting back in 2021, leaders of the skate park community began meeting quarterly with Parks & Recreation staff. These meetings revealed a strong need for improved skating and other wheeled sports facilities. The community has two skate parks over 20 years old, at Westlake Park and at Eagle Rim Park, both of which provide outdated features. A renovated Emerson Park with the skate park as the central feature is a high-priority, short-term project listed in the 2021 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.

Over the last several months, Team Pain has led an in-depth public engagement effort including two community meetings, an in-depth survey with over 150 responses from current skaters, as well as numerous focus group meetings to understand the current gaps and the best way to fill those gaps from a skate park amenities perspective. The result of that work was produced in the concept design displayed at the workshop.

The design includes a 16,000 square foot street plaza area and several bowls, meeting the community's desire for a pro-level bowl and intermediate and beginner flow bowls. The park will also have 14 parking spaces, and the design considers safety and visibility. The team worked closely with the community and received positive responses from 147 survey respondents.

There was a question about the restroom, which will be a portable steel corrugated structure with an enclosure, and it is a common practice in skate parks. This type of restroom is easier to maintain and can be locked up at night, making it a better choice for the site. The park design also includes other amenities like trash cans, benches, water fountains with double bottle fillers, and landscaping to beautify the area.

The presentation highlighted that the park would have sufficient parking space, and efforts were made to preserve mature trees along the park's edge.

Overall, the concept design received positive feedback from Council, and Council is excited about the project's progress.

c. **City Election**

• **Charter Amendment for Affordable Housing Leases**

Council discussed an ordinance to present to the City voters to change the City Charter to allow the City to lease City property for up to 99 years for affordable housing. Increasing the possible lease term from 25 up to 99 years will benefit the public by allowing the highest and best use of certain property and, in turn, contribute to reducing the shortage of affordable housing in the community. Voter approval of the ballot question will only change the possible lease term for affordable housing on City property now owned or after-acquired.

Pursuant to 151 of the Grand Junction City Charter, the Charter may be amended at any time in the manner provided by Article XX of the Constitution of the State of Colorado. On July 10, 2023, Staff presented to City Council that the Charter provision limiting leases of public property to a term of 25 years may be unduly restrictive for the possible use of City property for affordable housing. Especially as it pertains to new funding opportunities like Proposition 123, this limits the ability to implement Housing Strategy 6. Raising the lease term allows the highest and best use of certain property and in turn contributes to reducing the shortage of affordable housing in the community.

Council requested that "workforce housing" be added to the amendment and to remove specific location addresses.

• **Council Salaries**

This item continued discussion on a ballot measure to ask voters to increase City Council salaries. In 1999, Section 38 of the City Charter was amended to provide that City Council members are paid a salary of \$500.00 per month and the President of the Council is paid \$750.00 per month. The salaries have not been increased since 1999. If amended, the salary

increase would not become effective until 2025. The proposed ballot question, if approved by the voters, would also provide for the City Council, as allowed by the City's health insurance, to purchase insurance coverage under the City's policy(ies).

Pursuant to §151 of the Grand Junction City Charter, the Charter may be amended at any time in the manner provided by Article XX of the Constitution of the State of Colorado.

The proposed ballot question, if approved by the voters, would also provide for an index, the Denver-Boulder-Greely consumer price index (CPI), to be applied annually to adjust by ordinance the Council and President of the Council salaries by application of the CPI.

Adoption of the Ordinance and the proposed ballot question to amend the City Charter, will provide City voters the opportunity to determine if the proposed changes would be in the best interest of the City.

The question of when the next opportunity to vote on this matter would be if not this November, was reported as either November of 2024 or April of 2025.

Some Council members stated favor for a gradual increase over ten years, while others believe a higher amount is needed to attract a diverse range of candidates and make the Council position more accessible to a broader demographic. It was also noted that if the \$1500 a month for Councilmembers and \$2000 a month for the Mayor is approved, the increase would be for those elected in April of 2025 and after; however, the insurance provision would begin on January 1, 2024.

Discussion touched on the importance of educating the public about the reasons behind the salary increase and the value of the Council's work and service to the community.

Council grappled with the challenge of finding a balance between making the Council position more attractive, while being mindful of the public's perception and ensuring a fair and equitable process.

#### • **I-70 Interchange at 29 Road Update**

This agenda item was to discuss the status of the I-70 Interchange at 29 Road and potential issuance of transportation bonds.

The I-70 Interchange at 29 Road and the issuance of transportation bonds as a potential funding source for this project would require voter approval. To maximize voter approval, the City would ask City residents to approve the debt for the proposed project, with an agreement that the County would fund half of the annual debt back to the City annually for 30 years. Due to TABOR restrictions, this would be a moral obligation and dependent on the County annual appropriation for its budget.

An interchange at 29 Road has been identified since the 1990s in many local and regional plans to enhance local and regional connectivity, as part of a larger plan to provide connections in and around Grand Junction. The proposed interchange improvements, in coordination with other

regional improvements, have been envisioned to complete the transportation loop around Grand Junction, provide critical community access, support economic opportunity, and enhance local and regional connectivity. It will also improve access to I-70 by providing transportation infrastructure needed to accommodate planned land use surrounding I-70, and specifically, the future Matchett Park and the associated Community Recreation Center and regional traffic demands.

Some of the efforts to evaluate and further develop an interchange at 29 Road have included the following.

1999	Identified the need for an I-70 interchange in northeast Grand Junction.
2018	Studied benefits and potential environmental impacts of a 29 Road interchange
	Positioned the City and County for future state and federal funding opportunities.
2022	Developed vision and goals for future design concepts with local governments.
	Built consensus and documented key issues and opportunities with business, school, economic development, airport, and planning organizations.
2023	Analyzing and presenting potential interchange configurations for community input.

Continuation of these efforts is in process to complete the additional analysis necessary, develop a preliminary and final design, and secure funding for construction. The construction of the I-70 Interchange at 29 Road, and the associated road improvements along 29 Road between I-70 and Patterson Road were most recently estimated at \$80 million. The City of Grand Junction and Mesa County have a long history of working together to find solutions to funding a project of this magnitude, which may include the issuance of debt.

The project is to enhance the eastern Grand Valley transportation network between the I -70 Business Loop East Interchange and Horizon Drive Interchange to improve local and regional connectivity, provide enhanced access to planned land use surrounding I-70 in Grand Junction, provide improved local and regional connectivity by addressing limited regional transportation network connectivity with access to/from I-70 between I-70 Business and Horizon Drive interchanges and extending the functional longevity of the existing transportation system connecting to I-70.

Council’s main concern was assurance from the County that it would honor the 30-year moral obligation.

**2. City Council Communication**

Councilmember Kennedy asked about placing Council Policies, which is on the TBD workshop schedule, on a future workshop. Mayor Pro Tem Herman asked if Council would support Rural Philanthropy Days request to be held in Grand Junction; Council agreed. Councilmember Beilfuss asked if there could be some streamlining of regulations for vacating land, and

Councilmember Reitz asked if he could have approval to talk to Diane Schwenke to head-up a committee to garner support for the Charter amendment regarding the 99yearlease option; Council approved.

The Mayor reported that she has been asked to be part of the Colorado delegation to go to Santiago Chile in October 24-28 for the Biennial of the Americas Summit, and that she would officially announce her candidacy for Colorado's 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District August 1st.

The Mayor asked for one volunteer to serve with Councilmember Beilfuss on interviews for the Commission on Arts and Culture, and one volunteer to serve with the Mayor for interviews for Visit Grand Junction. Councilmember Kennedy volunteered for both.

### **Next Workshop Topics**

City Manager Caton reported the items for the August 14, 2023 Workshop will be:

- b. Zoning and Development Code
- c. Orchard Mesa Recreational Facility
- d. Counseling Education Center

### **3. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 9:02 p.m.