

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY **September 18, 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 (virtual), Dennis Simpson, Mayor Pro Tem Abe Herman, and Mayor Anna Stout.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Caton, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Director of Community Development Tamra Allen, Engineering Manager Ken Haley, Finance Director Emeritus Jodi Welch, Finance Director Jennifer Tomaszewski, Public Works Director Trent Prall, General Services Director Jay Valentine, Director of Parks and Recreation Ken Sherbenou, City Clerk Amy Phillips, and Deputy City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Community Recreation Center Design (CRC)

Director of Parks and Recreation Ken Sherbenou, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board member Bill Findley, and BRS Consultant Craig Bauck explained that Barker-Rinker-Seacat, partnered with Chamberlin Architects, and a broad team of engineers of every trade necessary to design a CRC in July 2022. Since then, the design has been evolving and another round of public engagement is scheduled for this week to ensure the CRC reflects the uniqueness of Grand Junction and meets the community's current needs for indoor recreation as much as possible.

BRS and Chamberlin gave a thorough presentation to Council during its workshop. It was noted that public feedback drove the creation of the 2022 CRC plan; and it is imperative to continue this connection through the design process and into construction. To do so, they will hold a Focus group meeting, a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) special CRC committee meeting, while in town and conclude with a public forum. The same presentation which was presented to Council will be recorded and made available for viewing and additional public comment online at EngageGJ.org.

The presentation included:

- Design, finalization, capacity determination, material selection, bidding, permitting, and construction.
- Budget management, independent cost estimates, contractor input, and prioritizing potential project additions.
- Updates on the project's site plan, emphasizing sustainability, stormwater management, and outdoor activation of spaces.
- Floor plan updates, such as adding additional swimming lanes, and a physical therapy space, and focus on building orientation for optimal views and energy efficiency.

- Research into long-lasting and low-maintenance building materials.
- Consideration of geothermal heating options, state interest in supporting geothermal initiatives, funding and operational challenges.
- Potential partnership with a physical therapy provider.
- Importance of prioritizing community needs over catering to specific interests with a focus on serving the broadest segment of the population.

Discussion ensued regarding geothermal heating which included possible grants, the benefits and challenges, such as the need for a balanced system due to the pool's constant heating needs, and a potential partnership with a physical therapy facility. Initial discussions started around 15 months ago. The City sent out a proposal to local hospitals, and more recently, they issued an RFP to engage broader interest. The space allocated for physical therapy was approximately 2900 square feet, and a plan to build it up to a "white box" stage and then potentially lease it out to a tenant has been proposed.

Discussion concluded with next steps, additional project updates including the current recruitment of the Construction Manager - General Contractor (CMGC), pursuit of grants, additional evaluation of building adjacencies to maximize compatibility and the continued evolution of the design threads described in the 2022 CRC Plan.

Council thanked staff, the design team and all involved in the project development.

Clerk note:

Item (A) did not take the full hour allotted, and the State Demographer would not be available until 6:30 p.m., so to keep the meeting moving, the Mayor requested that Item (C) be introduced.

c. Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

Director of General Services Jay Valentine introduced Consultants from by LBA Associates, Inc. in partnership with Kessler Consulting, Inc. who evaluated two MRF options to assess the economic viability of creating a new recyclables processing hub on the Western Slope that anticipates implementation of a new state-wide extended producer responsibility (EPR) program. Mr. Valentine explained that the City of Grand Junction is dedicated to maximizing landfill diversion practices. In 2022, the City acquired the recyclables collection and transfer operations of Curbside Recycling, Inc. (CRI), a long-standing private partner. The transition included the management of a multi-stream curbside system, the initiation of a dual-stream program, and the introduction of a green waste automated curbside program. The City's commitment to landfill diversion aligns with City Council sustainability goals.

The EPR legislation is on the horizon, with the potential to significantly increase landfill diversion rates in Colorado. This legislation aims to enhance recyclable recovery rates and introduce a new revenue stream generated by manufacturers of printed paper and packaging materials. This legislation is projected to enhance landfill diversion rates three- to four-fold across the state.

The idea behind EPR is that revenue from manufacturers will subsidize the costs associated with recyclable collection, transfer, and processing. Residential programs are expected to benefit from this revenue stream as early as 2026, with non-residential programs following suit by 2028 if statutory deadlines are met. The full scope and impact of Colorado's EPR program remains uncertain, making advanced planning a complex undertaking.

To address these challenges and prepare for EPR implementation, the City is evaluating Material Recovery Facility (MRF) capacities, capabilities, and costs. This evaluation is crucial for determining the necessary modifications to handle dual-stream and single-stream materials efficiently. The EPR program is expected to provide capital funding for the development of processing infrastructure, especially in underserved areas like the Western Slope. According to the feasibility report, depending on size and capability, cost estimates range from \$18.5 - \$32.8 million.

Clerk Note:

Council concluded the introduction of the Item (C) and continued the meeting with Item (B) as the State Demographer was online for her presentation.

b. Presentation by the State Demographer

The State Demography Office is the primary source for Colorado population and demographic information. Elizabeth Garner is our State Demographer. The Office provides population estimates and forecasts for Colorado's regions, counties, and municipalities developed by the State Demography Office and the U.S. Census Bureau. The State Demographer attended the workshop virtually and discussed demographics such as age, ethnicity, wages, employment, and growth.

The presentation noted several key points.

1. **Interconnectedness:** The presentation emphasized the interconnectedness of demographic and economic factors, such as jobs, labor force, population, age, ethnicity, and housing, and how these factors influence the region.
2. **Population Growth:** Colorado experienced substantial population growth over the past decade, but there has been a significant slowdown in the last two years, impacting Mesa County and Grand Junction.
3. **Aging Population:** The rapid growth of the 65-plus population and its implications for the labor force and economic demand.
4. **Regional Growth:** Larger counties are growing, while smaller ones are shrinking. Grand Junction's role as a regional center was emphasized.
5. **Population Change Components:** The components of population growth – births, deaths, and net migration – were discussed, with a focus of their impact on planning and development.
6. **Net Migration and Impact of Business Cycles:** Net migration's role in population change in Mesa County was highlighted, along with its correlation to economic conditions was shown to be influenced by economic cycles, with peaks and valleys.
7. **Housing Construction Trends:** Historical housing construction trends in Mesa County were discussed, particularly how economic cycles impact supply and demand.

8. **Population Aging and Housing:** The aging population's impact on housing supply and demand was explored, including the challenge of housing availability for the next generation.
9. **Financial Well-Being of Retirees:** Questions were raised about the financial well-being of retirees and concerns about their retirement resources.
10. **Housing Options for Seniors:** Concerns about seniors aging in large houses and the need for downsizing was discussed.
11. **Retail Jobs:** Discussions revolved around the nature and sustainability of retail jobs, especially those with lower wages.
12. **Impact on Tax Revenue:** The impact of the spending habits of an aging population on tax revenue, particularly regarding services and goods, was considered.

The Council expressed appreciation for the data-driven presentation and its value in decision-making, highlighting the complexity of demographic and economic factors affecting Mesa County and Grand Junction, emphasizing the need for strategic planning to address these trends effectively.

c. Materials Recovery Facility

In this part of the discussion, the focus was on the next steps and recommendations for the City's waste management and recycling efforts. Key points and questions raised include:

1. **Policy Recommendations:** The presentation highlighted critical policy recommendations, including flow control and hauler reporting. Flow control would ensure that waste goes to the designated facility, which is essential for its success. Hauler reporting would require solid waste haulers to provide data on the quantities of waste and recyclables they collect. These policies are considered time-critical for the facility's success and should be implemented as early as late 2023.
2. **Regional Approach:** The presentation emphasized the importance of considering a regional approach for waste management and recycling. Partnering with other municipalities and the unincorporated regions of Mesa County to implement flow control on a regional level is recommended. This approach has been successful in other areas and is favored by Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs.
3. **Mandatory Recycling Policy:** The presentation suggested exploring the implementation of a mandatory recycling policy for both residential and non-residential generators within the City. This policy could help ensure that recyclables are collected and processed, which may positively influence EPR funding decisions.
4. **Interim Upgrades:** There was a mention of interim upgrades to the recycling center to bridge the gap between the current state and the development of a new facility. These upgrades could help manage the increasing volume of recyclables.
5. **Property Considerations:** The need to assess the suitability of the potential property for the facility was mentioned. This includes evaluating demolition and retrofit needs and determining the associated costs.
6. **EPR and Sustainability:** The presentation emphasized the value of keeping momentum in waste management and recycling efforts while waiting for details on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs. EPR programs are expected to prioritize programs that are already in place and progressing.
7. **Regional Market:** The question of competition and potential market opportunities for a larger Materials Recovery Facility (Murph) was raised. It's noted that there is currently a

limited number of such facilities on the Western Slope, with most materials being transported to Denver or Salt Lake City.

8. **Charging Haulers:** There's was a question about whether haulers will be charged to drop off recyclables, considering that these materials can be sold as salable products.

City Council Communication

A concern regarding the closing of Whitman Park was discussed and how the decision was made, announced, and executed, as well as all those affected by the decision.

Discussion ensued, resulting in Councilmembers agreeing on the format for a listening session which will be added to the City Council agenda for Wednesday's meeting, and the scheduling of a community meeting with City Staff, Service Providers for the unhoused, and community members regarding Housing and People Experiencing Homelessness as soon as possible.

Councilmembers decided they will attend to listen to community concerns without actively participating in answering questions.

Next Workshop Topics

City Manager Caton reported the item for the October 2, 2023 Workshop will be:

- The City Manager's Proposed 2024 Budget

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 9:30 p.m.