

## GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

**July 31, 2013 – Noticed Agenda Attached**

Meeting Convened: 11:32 a.m. in the Administration Conference Room

Meeting Adjourned: 1:29 p.m.

Council Members present: All. Staff present: Englehart, Shaver, Schoeber, Camper, Watkins, Cohn, Smith (Matt), Krouse, Rainguet, and Tuin.

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### Agenda Topic 1. Homelessness Discussion

City Manager Englehart introduced the topic and then Police Chief John Camper presented an overview and statistics. He differentiated between homeless and vagrants/transients noting that the vagrancy/transient issues are the most visible. The Chief stated that this has been an issue in this community for a long time (since the 1930's) and will continue due to geography; the City has an interstate, the rivers, the railroad, and is the only major city between Denver and Salt Lake City. He said the best that can be done is to manage it. He referred to a "Municipal Cost of Homelessness" report that had been provided to the City Council.

The Police Department has taken a two prong approach: enforcement and intervention with the implementation of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). He introduced Commander Matt Smith, Sergeant Dave Krouse, and Officer Cindy Cohn as members of HOT.

Chief Camper said he resists the City being a dumping ground from other communities and if he hears about towns sending their vagrants to Grand Junction he will call them, however, Grand Junction is where the services are available. The Department has spent significant time and resources addressing the issue. Chief Camper believes they are making an impact. When asked for the number of transients, Officer Cohn estimated there are about 100 to 150 visible homeless in the community.

Council President Susuras inquired about revitalizing the former program of not handing out money but rather donating to the various assistance programs. Officer Cohn advised that the HOT team does provide a lot of education about giving to the service providers but some people still give money to the homeless.

Councilmember Norris inquired if any of the homeless people are doing harm to other citizens. Chief Camper replied only a very few but there is that perception that many are dangerous.

The Chief addressed the Trends and Observations. He said they are seeing younger, able bodied people passing through. The HOT team has been trying to work on where these people

are coming from and why are they coming here but typically they are not creating more calls for service.

Chief Camper advised that panhandling is not a violation of the law and there are Constitutional issues with prohibiting the activity. They are considering restricting the activity by addressing time, place, and/or manner, not necessarily to write more tickets, but rather it is a tool to get compliance. Several ideas were mentioned but the question arose as to where they go once displaced.

Chief Camper then addressed issues in the downtown area including aggressive panhandling. City Attorney Shaver noted that an ordinance was drafted in 2009 that addressed aggressive panhandling but it did not go forward. Chief Camper said that Police can deal with aggressive panhandling with increased patrols and bike patrols. Councilmembers expressed appreciation for the return of the bike patrols and there were concerns expressed as to whether there are enough patrols.

Chief Camper said he is in favor of the City adopting an ordinance but they just have to be careful about how it is written and how it approaches the activity. They can take a strategic approach to address some of the issues such as limiting alcohol in any park in partnership with the Parks Department. The splash pad issue was addressed. It was not a transient issue but rather a misuse issue and he suggested an age restriction be placed on the use of the fountain.

Chief Camper advised that if he hears about another locale sending their homeless to Grand Junction he will personally contact the sheriff or chief in that community and tell them to stop. However, Grand Junction is where the services are.

The difficulty in dealing with homeless sex offenders is going to take a legislative solution mandating they have a residence. Regarding parolees that are paroled to Grand Junction without a plan, the Chief said they need to be contacting those agencies sending them here and address it. The hospitals are refusing to take the "frequent fliers" but then what is the solution? The City Attorney's office is also working with the HOT team to get a list of the chronically inebriated and then work with liquor establishments so they refuse service to those on the list.

Chief Camper said the HOT team has been 80% effective; they have relocated 25 of 65 and 27 of the 65 are managing their own needs. They provide intensive intervention from the ground up.

Fire Chief Ken Watkins then addressed the emergency medical service (EMS) side of the homeless issue. He advised that out of 571 incidents last year involving alcohol, 160 of the

patients were homeless (listed general delivery as their address). On the fire side, they have concerns about illegal burning relative to safety such as when a campfire gets out of hand and causes a brush fire. For 2013, the Fire Department calls have been to Whitman Park 17 times, HomewardBound 60 times, and Emerson Park 20 times. The average responses from Fire Station #1 are three per day and most of those are transports. There are approximately 15 to 20 "frequent fliers" in the homeless community. Regarding ambulance billing, there were 401 transports in the last year based on "homeless" addresses. For those transports, they have billed \$294, 270 and there is \$203,761 still uncollected. There are limited solutions but they are working with the medical director to develop protocols where they may be able to avoid some of the transports.

Councilmember Chazen asked about the population of the homeless. Chief Camper said there are about 150 chronically homeless and the total homeless population at any given time is around 600 to 700. He noted there is a difference, i.e., vagrancy versus homelessness. Council President Susuras asked if the homeless are covered under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). City Attorney Shaver said they are looking into that relative to the Fire Department billing issues.

Returning back to Chief Camper, he noted that other than the HOT team, they approach the issue with enforcement and clean-up efforts. For example, when they cleaned up the "Point", they removed forty tons of trash. For the most part the large wholesale camps are gone. However, there has been some displacement.

Chief Camper pointed out that the HOT team in their work has become the de facto point of entry into the system of services. They are looking for another solution. Officer Cohn said HomewardBound is looking at stepping into that role. Another request was for the Parks Department to limit alcohol consumption at Emerson and Hawthorne Parks which has been implemented.

Chief Camper then addressed some recommendations: one point of entry for services (HomewardBound), evaluate the Police Department's role, pursue the legislative solution on sex offenders, limit parole and probation transfers to Grand Junction, bring ordinances forward for consideration, and recognize this is a community issue, not just a Police Department issue.

City Manager Englehart suggested that Councilmember Chazen, as the Council's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) representative, carry the message about the age restriction for the splash pad back to the DDA board.

Councilmember Boeschstein mentioned the Fort Lyons model and suggested using the State Regional home for housing.

In conclusion, the City Manager noted that there are lots of efforts to address the issue and he appreciates the support of City Council.

Councilmember Boeschstein left the meeting.

### Agenda Topic 2. County Meeting

City Manager Englehart reviewed the format of the upcoming meeting with the County Commissioners. He referred to the agenda but did not know how in depth the discussions would get.

There was a brief discussion on Amendment 64 and the ordinance drafted for the Council's consideration.

Councilmember Norris stated that the County has related to her that they want to be able to review any planned improvements to the Orchard Mesa Pool. Parks and Recreation Director Schoeber said they have always sent them proposed capital requests. City Attorney Shaver confirmed that is in the agreement. He advised that there are termination provisions in the agreement and the County has not exercised those provisions. Councilmember Norris said the County brought up the purchase of development rights (PDR) agreements. She was provided the history on those agreements.

Councilmember Chazen suggested the Council work to get the County's agreement to reinstate their participation with the Pool and then have the City and County Managers work out the agreement.

City Manager Englehart stated the Pool is aging and he is happy to provide a tour of the facility.

City Attorney Shaver brought up the idea of forming a district to develop some structure to the Pool operations. He has spoken with Commissioner Pugliese about that idea.

Councilmember Chazen asked for a little history on the agreement with Mesa Land Trust which was provided by City Manager Englehart and City Attorney Shaver.

Councilmember Boeschstein returned to the meeting (1:20 p.m.). He added some information about what Mesa Land Trust does and how their work prevents sprawl and makes each community (Fruita, Grand Junction, Palisade) its own. Councilmember Norris asked for a map of all the properties where development rights have been purchased.

Council President Susuras questioned the allocation of funds for the purchase of development rights when there are so many other needs in the City. Councilmember Boeschstein disagreed noting that contributing to this cause triples the money due to GOCO grants.

Agenda Topic 3. Other Business

City Manager Englehart advised that the bio-methane project with XCEL is ramping up.

Council President Susuras advised that newly appointed Councilmember McArthur would like to serve on the 521 Drainage Authority. Staff was directed to bring that change forward on the Consent Calendar at the next meeting.

Council President Susuras noted that the Public Safety Facilities dedication is scheduled for September 7. He suggested Councilmember Doody be the speaker.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2013, 11:30 A.M.**

**ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE ROOM  
2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR, CITY HALL  
250 N. 5<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

*To become the most livable community west of the Rockies by 2025*

- 1. Homelessness Discussion**
- 2. County Meeting**
- 3. Other Business**