

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

November 4, 2024

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

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

Staff present: Interim City Manager Andrea Phillips, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Interim Finance Director Jodi Welch, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Utilities Director Randi Kim, Transportation and Engineering Director Trent Prall, Housing Manager Ashley Chambers, Housing Specialist Sherry Price, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Resource Center Discussion (continued)

- Key Points of Community Concerns:
 - Downtown business owners and residents expressed ongoing frustration with the Resource Center's impact on safety, crime, and public perception in the surrounding area.
 - A neighborhood meeting on October 30, attended by 40-45 participants, revealed security concerns, including: Staff and customers feeling unsafe, escalating drug use, trash accumulation, and hazardous waste in public spaces and altercations and threatening behavior impacting the local business environment.
 - Many acknowledged that challenges with the unhoused population existed prior to the Resource Center but argued that its presence exacerbated these problems.
 - Some business owners called for the immediate closure of the Resource Center as a solution.
- Input and Engagement:
 - Staff reported holding meetings with local businesses and residents but noted the absence of unhoused individuals in these sessions.
 - Suggestions were raised to engage directly with Resource Center users in future discussions to understand their experiences and needs.
- Balancing Short-Term Needs and Long-Term Solutions:
 - Council discussed the challenges of addressing immediate neighborhood impacts while maintaining essential services for vulnerable populations.
 - Several members emphasized the need to ensure safety while also considering the adverse consequences of shutting down or relocating the center without proper alternatives in place.

- Operational Reforms and Recommendations:
 - Staff proposed implementing stricter intake and operational processes, including:
 - Requiring all visitors to check in at the gate and agree to a code of conduct.
 - Developing a clear disciplinary framework for violations, including trespass orders for repeat offenses such as drug use or violence.
 - Limiting the number of pets allowed and creating an outdoor kennel area to reduce chaos inside the center.
- Enhanced Security Measures:
 - Options discussed included hiring private security for the center, improving lighting in surrounding areas, and using crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) strategies to address safety concerns.
- Staffing and Partnerships:
 - Proposals included additional staffing to improve guest-to-staff ratios and better manage daily operations.
 - Strengthening partnerships with organizations like United Way to take over service coordination while Homeward Bound focuses on facility management.
- Relocation Plans:
 - Staff is actively exploring options to lease or purchase a new facility to relocate Resource Center operations.
 - Councilmembers expressed a preference for leasing to maintain flexibility while ensuring the new location is more suited to the Center's needs.
 - Criteria for relocation include:
 - Avoiding proximity to tourism-heavy or customer-reliant businesses.
 - Providing easy access to transportation and other essential services.
 - Prioritizing facilities ready for immediate occupation to minimize transition time.
- Emergency Funding Needs:
 - Homeward Bound and United Way requested \$140,000 in emergency funding to support immediate staffing and operational needs.
- Supplemental Appropriation Considerations:
 - Council discussed the possibility of allocating additional funds to address staffing shortages and security improvements while ensuring accountability for resource use.
 - A decision on these requests was deferred pending further budget evaluations.
- Service and Enforcement:
 - Several members emphasized the need for tighter enforcement of rules within and around the center to ensure safety for both users and the surrounding community.
 - Long-term success was linked to addressing the broader housing and transportation issues contributing to homelessness.

- Next Steps:
 - Winter Operations:
 - Council agreed to keep the Resource Center operational through winter while actively pursuing relocation plans.
 - Follow-Up Actions:
 - Staff was tasked with:
 - Developing a comprehensive relocation proposal by early 2025.
 - Implementing immediate operational improvements and security measures.
 - Engaging both community stakeholders and unhoused individuals in ongoing discussions.
 - Future Budget Considerations:
 - Additional funding requests for staffing, security, and infrastructure improvements will be reviewed during November budget workshops.
- b. **Request for City Contribution for Liberty Apartments Project by Aspire Residential, LLC**
- Development Details:
 - Liberty Apartments is a proposed two-phase, high-density multifamily housing development near Dos Rios Elementary.
 - Phase 1 will provide 172 units, while Phase 2 will add 120 units, offering a total of 292 units.
 - The project is designed as net-zero, with energy-efficient features such as renewable energy integration and utilities included for tenants.
 - It will meet Indoor AirPlus Standards, emphasizing sustainability and healthy living conditions.
 - The development aims to provide affordable housing for households earning between 80% and 90% of the Area Median Income (AMI).
 - The project location was strategically chosen for its proximity to public transportation and other community amenities.
- Funding Request:
 - Developers have reiterated the need for full city support, totaling \$1.7 million across both phases (\$1.3 million for Phase 1).
 - Funding is critical to securing state-level financing through Proposition 123 programs, which prioritize shovel-ready projects.
 - The project is well-positioned to leverage state funding under both equity and concessionary debt programs.
 - Being "shovel-ready" by early 2025 will improve its chances in the competitive application process.

- Financial and Operational Challenges:
 - Developers outlined the rising costs of construction and the financial hurdles in achieving project feasibility without full city support.
 - Meetings with potential lenders and equity partners have identified the funding gap as a barrier to meeting debt service coverage ratios and securing sustainable financing.
- Economic and Strategic Importance:
 - Council acknowledged the critical need for affordable housing in Grand Junction and the potential community benefits of the project.
 - Concerns were raised about balancing this funding request with other budgetary priorities.
- Funding Considerations:
 - Options for closing the funding gap included revisiting reserves, exploring grant opportunities, or phasing city contributions over time.
 - Councilmembers discussed the precedent such funding might set for future private development projects.
- Next Steps:
 - Staff and developers were tasked with refining financial models to explore alternative funding mechanisms.
 - A decision on additional funding will be revisited in upcoming budget discussions, considering Proposition 123 deadlines and city resource constraints.

c. Update on Long-Term Water Supply Strategies/Gunnison River Reservoirs

- Reservoir Expansion Studies:
 - Consultants and city staff presented findings on the feasibility of expanding reservoir capacity in the Gunnison River Basin.
 - The focus was on ensuring a long-term, sustainable water supply to meet increasing demand from population growth and economic development.
- Climate Resilience:
 - Discussions emphasized the need for water storage solutions that mitigate risks from climate variability, including prolonged droughts and changing precipitation patterns.
 - Reservoir expansions were highlighted as a key strategy for maintaining water security under these conditions.
- Collaboration with Regional Stakeholders:
 - The city is actively partnering with regional water boards, neighboring municipalities, and state agencies to explore shared water resources.

- Opportunities for cooperative funding and cost-sharing arrangements were discussed.
- Funding and Prioritization:
 - Council explored options for leveraging state and federal grants to support reservoir projects.
 - Questions were raised about the potential for phased implementation to spread costs over multiple fiscal years.
- Environmental Considerations:
 - Ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and addressing ecological impacts were recognized as critical to project approval.
 - Council emphasized the importance of balancing water storage needs with the preservation of local ecosystems.

d. Council Legislative Agenda/Policy

Postponed for discussion at a future meeting due to time constraints.

2. Council Communication

Councilmember Stout reminded everyone that the Sister City 20th Anniversary celebration was Saturday, November 9th at CMU at 6 p.m.

3. Next Workshop Topics

Mayor Herman outlined future workshop items.

4. Other Business

There was none.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 9:58 p.m.