

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY
December 2, 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 (virtual), Dennis Simpson, Mayor Pro Tem Randall Reitz, and Mayor Abram Herman. Councilmember Stout was absent.

Staff present: City Manager Mike Bennett, Interim City Manager Andrea Phillips, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Mobility Planner Henry Brow, Transportation and Engineering Director Trent Prall, Senior Planner Timothy Lehrbach, Senior Planner Daniella Acosta-Stein, Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou, Utilities Director Randi Kim, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams, and City Clerk Selestina Sandoval.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Confluence Center of Colorado Funding Request

The Confluence Center of Colorado, comprised of five local non-profits including RiversEdge West, One Riverfront, Colorado Canyons Association, the Colorado West Land Trust and Eureka! McConnell Science Museum is requesting \$299,748.60 in funding to assist in the construction an approximately 10,700 square foot building within the RiverFront at Dos Rios. The building will be home to this non-profit collaborative center and include office and meeting space and an early learning center for their employees and the broader community.

Councilmember Reitz disclosed his daughter is employed by Eureka and Councilmember Kennedy disclosed he has hosted fundraisers for them. City Attorney Shaver did not believe those created conflicts of interest for those councilmembers.

Executive Director of RiversEdge West Rusty Lloyd and Executive Director of Eureka McConnell Science Museum Jen Moore presented this item.

Key points included:

- Budget: Total cost is \$7.8 million, including \$7.5 million for construction. \$4.3 million has been raised through grants, local donations, and state funding. A city funding request of \$299,000 remains.
- This facility would create 25 new jobs, 45 childcare slots, and enhanced educational programming for 3,500 youth annually.

- Conferences and workshops hosted at the facility are expected to attract external visitors, providing economic benefits to the city.

Council Discussion:

- Support: Councilmembers expressed enthusiasm for the project's alignment with economic and educational goals and its potential as a catalyst for Dos Rios development.
- Concerns: Clarifications were sought on city funding mechanisms, ownership structures, and the status of land transactions.
- Direction was provided for staff to move forward with some form of agreement to bring before Council.

b. EV Carshare – Readiness Study – Presentation, Discussion, and Council Direction

The Grand Junction Electric Vehicle (EV) Carshare Feasibility and Readiness Study evaluates community needs and identifies opportunities to implement an EV carshare service in the City of Grand Junction and the surrounding area. Carshare is a car rental service, typically booked hourly or daily, that helps community members access vehicles on an as-needed basis, without the costs and responsibilities associated with car ownership. A carshare program in Grand Junction can address a wide range of transportation challenges facing community members, particularly within disproportionately impacted communities and those who are transportation insecure. Combining the multifaceted benefits of a carshare program with the greenhouse gas emission reduction and air quality benefits of an EV fleet can help deliver impactful change to the community.

Mobility Planner Henry Brown presented this item with the assistance of Walter Scheib, project leader for the consultant team.

Key points included:

- The project has two phases:
 - Phase I - Needs Assessment Report to analyze existing conditions, engage the community, Carshare Index Analysis, and provide tiered carshare location recommendations.
 - Phase II – Technical readiness report for existing carshare program case studies, recommended model, cost estimate, and implementation of funding opportunities and partnership consideration.
- Pilot proposal consists of two EVs stationed at the Grand Junction Housing Authority (2814 Patterson Road), using existing EV chargers. Costs include \$211,000 for a three-year pilot, with potential 95% funding from the Colorado Energy Office's Community Access Enterprise program.

- Surveys and focus groups highlighted moderate interest among residents facing travel challenges.
- Key benefits include lower transportation costs and increased flexibility.
- Challenges included operational costs, scalability, and ensuring equity in access.

Council Discussion:

- Support for Grant Application: General agreement to pursue state funding for the pilot program.
- Concerns: Equity of serving a single location, high initial costs, and limited reach of the program.
- Alternative Proposals: Transportation vouchers for low-income residents and leveraging existing ride-share services were suggested as potentially more scalable and equitable solutions.
- Direction: Proceed with the grant application while exploring additional transportation models and partnerships.

c. **Turf Limitation of Single Family and Duplex Lots and Water-Wise Landscape**

In the ongoing effort to stem water shortage issues, the Colorado General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, legislation earlier this year restricting the installation of non-functional, artificial, and invasive turf. The bill requires that municipalities enact regulations in accordance with the new law on or before January 1, 2026. Compliance will entail that the City amend its landscaping requirements in the Zoning and Development Code. The need to amend this chapter creates an opportunity to evaluate it and to identify further changes which may advance City goals and policies.

Senior Planners Timothy Lehrbach and Daniella Acosta-Stein presented this item.

Key points included:

- Alternatives to consider:
 - Compliance Only: Adopt required changes for non-residential and multifamily properties.
 - Extended Turf Restrictions: Apply limits or bans to single-family and duplex front yards.
 - Water-Wise Landscaping: Require or incentivize planting water-efficient vegetation to mitigate heat retention and improve canopy coverage.
- Challenges to implementation include:
 - Administrative burdens: Plan reviews, inspections, and enforcement for single-family lots would require significant resources.

- Public acceptance: Concerns about resistance from residents relying on irrigation or preferring traditional lawns.

Council Discussion:

- Prioritize compliance with state law but avoid mandating turf restrictions on residential lots.
- Preferred approach included the development of an approved list of suitable grasses for non-residential and multifamily properties, with voluntary adoption for single-family lots.
- Expand incentives for water-wise landscaping and public education efforts.
- Staff will draft compliance amendments and prepare educational materials, while also exploring incentive-based water conservation approaches tied to utility fees.

d. Water-Wise Landscaping at Lilac Park

In line with the Council's strategic priority of resource stewardship, the Parks and Recreation Department has been planning to convert non-used turf areas into native and xeric landscaping. One of the lowest-hanging fruits in the community is Lilac Park, a significantly underutilized space that absorbs tremendous water and maintenance resources. This workshop seeks Council input on preferences for investment in renovations to ensure a quality aesthetic achieved in a way that reduces water use and maintenance effort.

Parks and Recreation Direction Ken Sherbenou presented this item with the assistance of Dean Pearson with Architerra Group.

Key points included:

- Three designs were presented:
 - Minimalist Conversion: Replace bluegrass with native or hybrid turf. Cost: \$73,000, annual savings of \$21,700, payback in 3.4 years.
 - Meandering Plantings: Add ornamental and evergreen trees with pathways. Higher cost, but aesthetic and environmental benefits.
 - Enhanced Design: Combine diverse plantings, pathways, and water-efficient systems for maximum impact.

Council Discussion:

- Council favored a minimalist approach prioritizing water savings while maintaining park aesthetics.
- Potential grants from the Colorado Water Conservation Board were discussed.

2. Council Communication

There was none.

3. Next Workshop Topics

Mayor Herman outlined future workshop items.

4. Other Business

City Manager Mike Bennett asked the Council if they would be interested in scheduling a special workshop in January or February to discuss their expectations of him as the new city manager. There was support of scheduling this.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Workshop adjourned at 8:43 p.m.