

GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP SUMMARY

December 16, 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, Mayor Pro Tem Randall Reitz, and Mayor Abram Herman and Councilmember Stout.

Staff present: City Manager Mike Bennett, City Attorney John Shaver, Assistant to the City Manager Johnny McFarland, Community Development Director Tamra Allen, Parks and Recreation Director Ken Sherbenou, Chief of Police Matt Smith, Fire Chief Ken Watkins, Interim Fire Chief Gus Hendricks, General Services Director Jay Valentine, Deputy City Clerk Misty Williams, and Deputy City Clerk Krystle Koehler.

1. Discussion Topics

a. Impact Fee and Linkage Fee Study Update

Impact Fee Study Overview

Consultants from TischlerBise presented a detailed update on the draft impact fee structure. Key updates and findings include:

- **Population and Development Projections:**
 - Population: Anticipated growth of 17,260 people in the city, plus 3,270 in the surrounding 201 area over 10 years.
 - Housing Units: Expected addition of 8,200 units in the city and 850 in the 201 area.
 - Employment: 16,600 new jobs anticipated, requiring approximately 6.6 million square feet of non-residential space.
- **Fee Components:**
 - Transportation: Fees updated to include multimodal network improvements (trails, sidewalks, bike lanes).
 - Parks and Recreation:
 - Parkland fees introduced to replace current land dedication requirements.
 - Impact fees calculated based on growth projections, with costs including new parkland, open space, and park improvements.
 - Fire and Police:
 - New facilities and equipment need to accommodate projected growth.

- Example: 15,240 square feet of police facilities and 19,200 square feet for fire at a cost of 13.9M, along with 10 additional fire apparatus at a cost of 3.3M.
 - Municipal Facilities: New office space and operational facilities for growth-related service demands.
- Fee Adjustments:
 - Tiered Residential Fee Structure: New approach based on housing size, shifting from uniform fees for single-family and multi-family units.
 - Projected Revenue vs. Costs:
 - Parks and Recreation: \$46.9M in revenue, \$49.9M in costs, leaving a \$3M funding gap.
 - Transportation: \$133.694,557M revenue vs. \$144.668,755M in costs.
 - Fire: \$16.6M revenue vs. \$17.2M in costs.
 - Gaps attributed to credits for existing debt and assumptions about non-annexed development.

Council Discussion Points:

- Housing Affordability:
 - Concerns about fees disproportionately affecting smaller homes and starter housing.
 - Desire for equitable fee distribution among housing types.
- Transportation and Parks:
 - Questions about maintaining service levels without deterring new development.
 - Debate over the inclusion of open space in impact fee calculations, with some councilmembers suggesting it could be omitted.
- Fee Structure and Growth:
 - Emphasis on using fees to address growth impacts while avoiding penalties for existing deficiencies.
 - Requests for further analysis to validate fee projections and compare to peer cities.

Linkage Fee Study

TischlerBise also presented findings on linkage fees, focusing on non-residential development's impact on affordable housing needs.

- Study Highlights:
 - Focused on job creation from non-residential development and corresponding housing demand for workers earning at or below 100% Area Median Income (AMI).
 - Used weighted construction cost averages to estimate affordability gaps for rental and for-sale units.
- Council Concerns:
 - Impact on Business Development:

- High fees for certain sectors (e.g., retail and lodging) could deter investment.
- Calls for modeling fees based on historical development trends to predict revenue impacts.
- Fee Methodology:
 - Questions about the basis for income thresholds and job estimates per square foot.
 - Requests to re-examine how mixed-use and speculative developments would be assessed.
- Workforce Housing Needs:
 - Discussion of alternative funding mechanisms, including grants and public-private partnerships.
 - Concerns about balancing housing affordability with maintaining a competitive commercial environment.

b. Possible 2025 Municipal Election Questions

Potential Ballot Questions:

- First Responder Tax:
 - Revisiting the previous half-percent sales tax for police and fire services.
 - Emphasis on sustainable funding for operational costs, which have outpaced revenues from the 2019 tax measure.
 - General agreement to delay until at least 2026 to allow for public outreach and detailed analysis.
- Council Salaries:
 - Proposal to tie council salaries to a percentage of the area median income.
 - Suggested exclusions for current council members and those elected in April 2025 to address public concerns over self-compensation.
- Rank Choice Voting:
 - Discussion of implementing ranked choice voting for municipal elections.
 - Questions about voter education and alignment with state election systems.
- Workforce Housing:
 - Dedicated funding proposals for affordable housing, potentially linked to the linkage fee discussion or other revenue sources.
- Charter Amendments:
 - Moving municipal elections to November odd-numbered years to increase turnout.
 - Considering a directly elected mayor model, based on Fruita's structure, where the mayor serves as a public figure but has limited voting power.
- Collective Bargaining for Firefighters:
 - Discussion of placing a referendum on the ballot to formalize a collective bargaining agreement.
 - Acknowledgment that this could be deferred to align with firefighter requests for implementation in 2026.

Council Discussion:

- Agreement on the need for robust public engagement and education for any ballot initiatives, especially tax-related measures.
- Preference for deferring more complex issues (e.g., first responder tax) to November or later elections.
- Interest in prioritizing low-barrier initiatives, such as council salaries, for the April 2025 ballot.

2. City Council Communications

The Council discussed scheduling an Executive Session regarding the Resource Center.

3. Next Workshop Topics

The Mayor summarized future workshop topics.

4. Other Business

There was none.