

**GRAND JUNCTION
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

June 16, 2003

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction, Colorado met on Monday, June 16, 2003 at 6:03 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium to discuss workshop items. Those present were Harry Butler, Cindy Enos-Martinez, Bruce Hill, Dennis Kirtland, Gregg Palmer and President of the Council Jim Spehar. Absent was Councilmember Bill McCurry.

Summaries and action on the following topics:

1. **DISCUSSION OF TRANSIENT ISSUE:** Police Chief Greg Morrison prepared a report to Council on the results of the study regarding this issue.

City Manager Kelly Arnold introduced the report. Behavior of some transients is to be discussed. He then turned it over to Police Chief Greg Morrison. Chief Morrison identified the agencies that assist homeless individuals. He listed the concerns the police hear from City residents. He then showed a video of some of the campsites they found on Watson Island. Chief Morrison commented that the Health Dept. did not deem the human waste they found as a health issue, so they did not respond with the police.

Chief Morrison noted how the police have responded to calls for service where a victim, witness or suspect was a transient. In a four-year time frame, there were 2100 police contacts who listed themselves as transients. The calls for service regarding transients are up 137%.

The Chief listed the legal behaviors and the illegal behaviors attributed to transients. Panhandling along the side of the roadway, out of the traffic lanes, is a legal and protected activity under the Constitution. Being drunk is not an illegal activity. Additionally, taking an intoxicated individual into custody is a problem because there is no place in Grand Junction to take them. Colorado West is planning a detox center but there is no such facility now.

Chief Morrison then addressed the number of calls for service in general versus those involving transients and how many hours police officers have spent on these incidents.

The stakeholders in this issue were identified by the Chief and he listed the main issues or "Hot Buttons". He concluded by listing some options. City Council could enact ordinances prohibiting aggressive panhandling, prohibiting the sale of alcohol to habitual drunkards, prohibiting motorists from impeding traffic to give money to panhandlers, prohibiting large-scale distribution of free food in city parks and public places. The City can work to reduce habitat along the rivers that are used by transients for camping.

Mayor Spehar asked about the impact on police if one or all of those ordinances were enacted. Chief Morrison said it would depend on the priority given to enforcement of those provisions. Councilmember Palmer asked

about the impact for three of the suggestions, adjudicating habitual drunkards, prohibiting all drinking in the parks and removing tamarisk (habitat). Chief Morrison said there might be other issues created from these actions, one being the dedication of police hours. Council President Spehar noted that some things like permits for food distribution might not require police time. Although Chief Morrison agreed, it will take time away from some department.

Councilmember Enos-Martinez questioned as to what the problem is with free food in the park. City Manager Arnold responded that there is no monitoring or tracking, noting he is not sure that is the use Council wants to occur in the parks. Councilmember Butler asked if the providing organization is cleaning up the park following the distribution. City Manager Arnold noted that may be the problem that they are not. Councilmember Hill said he witnessed the large food distribution at a park and felt that it showed this to be a caring community. The trash problem is probably a result of not enough receptacles. Regarding the alcohol problem, the alcohol being consumed by these folks is not 3.2 % beer, so the current law is not being enforced. He suggested the City look at ways it can fill in the gaps. Councilmember Butler agreed noting that without that food distribution service other scavenging may occur. Councilmember Palmer asked how the problem individuals can be dealt with without affecting those that are not causing a problem.

Chief Morrison asked Council to consider who should be the leader in this issue and what City resources should go toward this issue as it is more a social issue than a police issue.

Councilmember Kirtland questioned when the matter gets to a point where it is a problem. Chief Morrison noted that this is a nationwide issue and dealing with it is beyond the expertise of just the police. The number of police incidents is a small percentage of the number of overall calls.

Councilmember Palmer asked about a loitering law. City Attorney Wilson said loitering without another activity is not illegal. Mr. Wilson mentioned a law against gang loitering did withstand judicial review in Chicago but specific activities were identified.

Council President Spehar said he does not want to negatively impact those that are temporarily in need. He suggested the City take the opportunity to work with churches and non-profits to ensure there are provisions made for trash pickup when the food distributions take place and for the City to also look at this issue during Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) consideration and put the City resources towards needs that are not being met in this area.

Action summary: City Manager Arnold said he will bring this back to Council in September, meanwhile he will concentrate some coordinating efforts at Whitman Park. Council President Spehar added Emerson Park too and directed Mr. Arnold to look at some other options. Long term he asked Mr. Arnold to look at how much money being spent on other activities as opposed to a holding facility (detox) and perhaps focus those resources to drive a solution to this problem

The Council also thanked the Chief and his staff, and noted the value of the new crime analyst position for the compilation of data for this study.

ADJOURNED at 7:15 p.m.