

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP SUMMARY  
December 19, 2005**

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction, Colorado met on Monday, December 19, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium to discuss workshop items. Those present were Councilmembers Bonnie Beckstein, Teresa Coons, Jim Doody, Gregg Palmer, Jim Spehar, Doug Thomason and President of the Council Bruce Hill.

**Summaries and action on the following topics:**

1. **APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS & COMMISSIONS:** City Clerk Stephanie Tuin presented options to the City Council for filing vacancies on the Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

**Action summary:** The City Council agreed to interview the applicants who applied and the three incumbents requesting reappointment. January 11<sup>th</sup> was the date selected with Councilmembers Beckstein, Coons, Palmer, Spehar, and Council President Hill volunteering for the interview committee. The Council declined to interview the first alternate.

2. **EMS UPDATE:** The Grand Junction Fire Department (GJFD) and Ambulance Medical Response (AMR) have submitted further information. A staff committee consisting of the City Manager, City Attorney, Administrative Services Director and the Assistant City Attorney have reviewed the amended proposals and interviewed representatives of both proposers. City Manager Kelly Arnold updated Council on the process and how the two companies were rated. He said there were some concerns with the financial data submitted from both companies. The Grand Junction Fire Department rated higher of the two. Mr. Arnold said both companies provided supplementary financial information and a review committee convened to review the information. He said the quality and cost of both proposals were impressive. However, looking at the cost, the review committee could not justify the cost of accepting the GJFD proposal due to the initial cash infusion and the annual cost, bringing the cost to about \$1.4 million over the first five years. He said AMR, for the same service and coverage, would have no cost to the City; in fact there may be some opportunities for revenue sharing.

Councilmember Coons inquired about the contract provisions to ensure performance. City Manager Arnold advised that all performance remedy provisions will be included in the contract drafted by the City's legal department.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer inquired about the non-emergent transport being included in the City's proposal. Administrative Services and Finance Director Ron Lappi said those are for the most part included in the new financial information, some of the out area non-emergent transports might be contracted

out. Fire Chief Rick Beaty advised that due to the close working relationship with the current contractor, the Fire Department is well aware of the number and type of transports that are made. He said the numbers provided are a conservative estimate.

Councilmember Spehar inquired if the maximum allowable to be charged was used. Mr. Lappi said the fees and charges to the users were the same in both proposals and so they were the maximum allowed. Chief Beaty said the Fire Department would provide quality service, have a high level of responsibility and it would require additional resources to provide that quality service.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer asked if it would affect other Fire Department services. Chief Beaty said the reason for the additional resources is so it would not affect those services.

Councilmember Coons questioned if outsourcing makes more sense.

Councilmember Spehar said that he has concerns of making a decision based on finances given the fact that there is a quality difference. He said that he is also concerned with having two services show up, one that does the first response and the other does the transport. He said this is a unique opportunity to affect a change and do the full integration, noting there is no better time to do it than now.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer said patient care is more important than the cost, noting that AMR is doing a great job. He said that he calculated that the cost would amount to an additional \$13 per person annually to select the City Fire Department as the provider.

Councilmember Coons asked about the City making the investment, then contracting out the non-emergent transport anyway and questioned if emergent transport is a money maker. Mr. Lappi said that it is.

Council President Hill said at present the City is prepared to be the first responder and his main goal is to provide the citizens the best services available. He said he would be more comfortable with making a capital investment if the City was close to covering the cost and said maybe in five years the investment can be justified. He said that he feels the Fire Department is in a better position as first responder.

Councilmember Doody inquired about the collaborative options and suggested locating AMR ambulances at the fire stations. City Manager Arnold said that is possible but might change the cost sharing situations.

Councilmember Spehar asked why Council should choose AMR. Mr. Arnold said that AMR's proposal is solid; they have been in the business for a long time and

know their systems. He does not feel the time to change is now; it may be in the future.

Councilmember Coons asked why this is being looked at now. Mr. Arnold said the County resolution gave the City the opportunity to look at changing and the City has therefore gone through the process. Councilmember Coons asked how the current AMR proposal is different from this proposal. Mr. Arnold said the new proposal is in compliance with the County's resolution which sets the standards and now there is a performance measure that has not been in previous contracts. Councilmember Coons asked if the current agreement meets those performance criteria. Mr. Arnold said the service has significantly improved in the last six months. Chief Beaty said AMR is currently working under an interim agreement.

Councilmember Doody asked for explanation about the resolution and how it got the City to this point. City Attorney John Shaver explained the history including the philosophy, mainly to ensure the quality of emergency care county-wide. He said the resolution also designated certain areas of service. Mr. Shaver said the County Attorney has determined that the resolution does not apply to non-emergency services.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer asked about Fruita and Clifton. Mr. Shaver said they do their own emergency response services, whereas Lands End contracts their services out. Mr. Shaver noted that the GJASA (Grand Junction Ambulance Service Area) includes Glade Park and all of the Grand Junction Rural Fire Protection District.

Councilmember Spehar said Council should certainly look at the most cost efficient way but public safety should be the primary consideration. He said the GJFD rated higher so his mind is made up. He said the City is responsible for the GJASA and feels the Fire Department should provide the services.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer said he has been on the emergency service committee and said he is looking long-term for the City. He said having the GJFD as the primary player, it will strengthen mutual aid and provide better relationships and strengthen the City's Fire Department. He said it is not all about the money. He supports the Fire Department proposal.

Councilmember Thomason also supports the City's proposal.

Councilmember Doody inquired if the decision is being made tonight. Mr. Shaver advised direction can be given to begin negotiations and to put some things in place for the Fire Department to take over.

Councilmember Doody said that it makes sense to have one as a first responder and feels they should be the one to transport. He said that he supports the Fire Department proposal.

Councilmember Coons said this is not a cost issue, but is concerned with quality and is afraid the Fire Department might be spread too thin. She feels that it is not a bad idea to have a first responder and then have someone else do the transport. She said that she supports Staff's recommendation to select AMR.

Councilmember Beckstein supports Staff's recommendation of the two tier system, using AMR for transports.

Council President Hill wanted to clarify that every decision made is a cost-based decision regardless if it is the Fire Department, etc. He said right now it looks clumsy with all the vehicles that show up and said the transport is a very important service. A separate transport company will allow the Fire Department to be ready for emergency response. He supports Staff's recommendation, noting there is still a majority for the other proposal.

Councilmember Spehar said that he tried to evaluate the proposals neutrally; and his decision is based on what is good for the community long term.

**Action summary:** Staff was directed to begin negotiations and make arrangements to put the GJFD proposal in place.

The Council President called a recess at 8:45 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

3. **TABOR UPDATE AND STRATEGIES:** Administrative Services and Finance Director Ron Lappi reviewed the City's status in regards to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights and identified strategies to be used in the future to deal with such limitations. He highlighted the various provisions and its affect on the City's finances. He said the big affect is the provision that does not allow the City to retain revenues collected over a growth standard. In Grand Junction, the rate of growth and revenues has stayed fairly close and for the most part only small amounts have had to be refunded with the exception of the year 1999. He anticipates the amount of refunds will increase significantly in 2006 to over a million dollars. He said one possibility is to ask the voters to retain revenues in order to pay down some debt, such as the Riverside Parkway bonds. Most of the refunds go to major corporations out of town and out of state.

Councilmember Coons questioned why the City is tied to the Denver-Boulder Consumer Price Index (CPI). Mr. Lappi said the provisions of TABOR require it, as it is the only published CPI. It is in the State Constitution.

Councilmember Beckstein asked if de-brucing allows the City to accept other grants it can't at present due to TABOR limitations. Mr. Lappi said right, that state grants count against the revenue limitation.

Councilmember Beckstein questioned the affect of the severance tax.

Mr. Lappi said that is small in comparison, but the overall growth has been enough so those funds have not been affected.

Councilmember Spehar said much of the State's problem is voluntary, with its permanent tax rate cuts. He said the City has only done temporary credit mill levies. Mr. Lappi said if there is a dip in the economy, the City is prepared so that it does not "ratchet" the City down.

Councilmember Spehar inquired when the Riverside Parkway bonds will be repaid. Mr. Lappi said by 2024.

Councilmember Spehar said the best way to go forward is to ask voters to pay a portion of those bonds off early just as Council President Hill suggested.

Council President Hill said that corporate America outside of Grand Junction is taking the bulk of the revenue refunds. He suggested asking voters to retain revenues until debt is paid off.

Mr. Lappi said also, sometime between now and 2013, the City may have another bond issue question to build major facilities, for example, a new Police Station.

Councilmember Coons agreed about going to the voters for another high priority project like that.

Council President Pro Tem Palmer said that he agrees with Councilmember Coons; going to the voters in order to build a new police station.

Council President Hill suggested allowing that to move forward naturally and ask the citizens if they want the facilities now by issuing bonds or if they want to wait and pay as they go.

Mr. Lappi noted the City's sales tax is one of the lowest in the state, plus there is no sales tax on groceries.

Council President Hill said the idea needs to be tested and keep that narrow focus to reduce the Riverside Parkway debt; possibly asking the voters November, 2006.

**Action summary:** Council will test and pursue a possible question to the voters to retain revenues to pay off the Riverside Parkway debt and be prepared to go forward with a campaign. Council directed Staff to put together a strategy and bring it back by February or March.

## **ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.