

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP SUMMARY
August 14, 2006**

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction, Colorado met on Monday, August 14, 2006 at 7:02 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium to discuss workshop items. Those present were Councilmembers Bonnie Beckstein, Teresa Coons, Bruce Hill, Gregg Palmer, Jim Spehar, Doug Thomason, and Council President Jim Doody.

Summaries and action on the following topics:

- 1. DISCUSS BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS:**
City Clerk Stephanie Tuin presented the current issues with the Council district boundaries and presented possible options for adjustments. Ms. Tuin said boundary adjustments are one of the few things that Council can change in the Charter without a vote. She said Council can change the actual legal descriptions of the district boundaries in the Charter by resolution. Ms. Tuin said the last time the boundaries were adjusted was in the year 2000. She reviewed the boundaries from the year 2000 and also the areas that have been added due to annexations that have occurred. Ms. Tuin suggested some possible ways that Council can make small changes to the boundaries and balance the population. She explained that Council is not obligated to establish districts that are proportional by population, registered voters, or by land mass.

Councilmember Spehar questioned if the numbers provided are a three year projection. Ms. Tuin said the projection was based on the approved 2005 – 2006 subdivisions and said it depends on how long it takes to build those out. Councilmember Spehar questioned if Council traditionally looks at the district boundaries every 3 to 5 years. Ms. Tuin said it has been 6 years since the last changes were made and said before that it was longer. During high growth periods, City Clerk Tuin recommended a review at least every five years.

Councilmember Hill thanked Ms. Tuin for all of her hard work providing scenarios and suggestions for Council. He said this could be a good time to ask Council to form a Charter Commission that is made up of a good cross section of citizens to look at the Charter and make recommendations to Council for any possible changes.

Councilmember Coons inquired if Councilmember Hill is suggesting looking at changes to be ready for the election in April or allow a year or two for the Charter Commission to research the Charter before sending it to the voters. Councilmember Hill said the Charter Commission should be given enough time to research the Charter and reach out to the community to get feedback from the citizens and not rush for a deadline in April.

Councilmember Coons asked Councilmember Hill if he is suggesting that Council look at some minor redistricting in the short term and a Charter Commission taking a longer time. Councilmember Hill said he is uncomfortable making minor changes to the Charter. He would rather postpone the redistricting until a Charter Commission completes its review.

Councilmember Coons asked Ms. Tuin if there were any compelling reasons to look at boundary changes for this year's upcoming election. Ms. Tuin responded that the population range between districts is at 10%. In a couple years, it is projected to be at 15%; which could still be considered reasonable if there is justification. However, it is on the outer edge of being considered balanced.

Councilmember Spehar feels that there is a mixed number of issues being discussed this evening. He said that he has not had anyone from the community ask why the City doesn't do things differently. He feels that the general public does not perceive that there is a problem with the Charter and said this has not been a topic of conversation that the community has approached him with.

Councilmember Palmer said Council can make some minor changes and can make those changes as frequently or as infrequently as it desires. He would like to proceed in that particular matter on an as needed basis.

Council President Doody thanked Ms. Tuin for all of her hard work on this item. He asked Councilmember Hill to discuss in more detail if a committee were to be formed who would serve on the committee. Councilmember Hill said it is up to the Council. He said Council could solicit interested citizens and then choose who would be on the committee.

Council President Doody asked Councilmember Hill what part of the Charter he wants looked at and changed. Councilmember Hill said he is not looking to change the Charter but to have a committee look at it and have the public's observations.

Councilmember Coons wanted to make sure that the City does not get into a situation where the citizens spend a lot of time discussing Charter amendments and then have it get dismissed.

Councilmember Spehar stated that going back to the basic premise, this was a citizens Charter back in 1925. He said that he could see making a change if there was a line of people saying that the Charter needs to be changed, but no one is standing there. He said Council has the option at anytime to do the housekeeping changes. He proposed putting a technical clean up on the ballot since the community is not asking for the Charter to be changed.

Councilmember Hill said he represents the community “At Large” and he has had citizens express concerns. He said that he feels it is worthy to look at the City Charter.

Councilmember Palmer said he also represents the community through “District C” and has not heard the same concerns.

Council President Doody said that he can see what Councilmember Hill is asking. He said the Charter was written over 80 years ago and Councilmember Hill is asking to form a task force just to review the Charter.

Councilmember Beckstein asked when the Charter was last updated. Ms. Tuin said the last change was to change the Council’s salary. She said in the earlier years Council made a lot of changes, but within the last 13 years there have not been very many changes to the Charter.

Councilmember Spehar said one direction is to have Staff revisit with Council the list of housekeeping changes to update the Charter. He said he would like to adjust the boundaries and wait to hear from the citizens before making more substantive changes to the Charter.

Councilmembers Coons, Palmer, and Thomason agreed.

Councilmember Beckstein said she does not have a problem with looking into the Charter and make sure it is servicing the community in the right way. She supports forming a committee to look into the Charter and make recommendations if there is a need for changes or to see if the Charter is serving the community as it is.

Councilmember Hill said it is part of his responsibility for this community to look at things like this. He feels that the community has not been given the opportunity to come forward and discuss the Charter. He suggested there be a luncheon for citizens to come and talk to Council to give their comments on the Charter. He said that he is only suggesting making the Charter better and allowing the citizens to come forward and to address their comments.

Council President Doody said he would like to be open minded about the request to form the task force.

Action summary: Staff was directed to bring two resolutions with two different scenarios regarding the boundary adjustments and Council will discuss further the forming of a focus group to review the Charter.

Council President Doody called a recess at 8:39 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

2. **CODE TEXT AMENDMENTS:** A list of proposed Code changes has been compiled. Staff will review the time line for the proposed changes, inform the City Council as to the process for changing the Code, and present some brief information on each of the proposed amendments for Council consideration.

Interim Community Development Director Sheryl Trent reviewed this item. She said discussions have been held with various community members who are part of a focus group and some of those members are in attendance. She then introduced each of them.

Councilmember Hill expressed his support and gratitude for the continuing efforts to refine the Zoning and Development Code.

Ms. Trent then addressed five items that the focus group would like to address and said the first three issues are Big Box Standards including the reuse of vacated big box facilities, the renaming of Big Box to Large Retail Establishments (LRE) to differentiate them from large hotels and motels, and a fee to be assessed that would be used to rehabilitate such facilities. City Attorney John Shaver then added that there may even be requirements that the building be built so that it can be subdivided later. Ms. Trent said the next item is non conforming sites and reduction of landscaping, screening and buffering requirements. She said the Code requires 100% compliance and the suggestion from the focus group is 80% compliance.

Councilmember Hill pointed out examples of facilities that were built under the old standards and said now the new owner wants to remodel so the new Code requirements are then applied. He said a change in use or a 25% remodel will trigger that requirement and suggested the threshold be 75%.

Councilmember Palmer said he is concerned when the City has a change and grandfathers something, then the grandfathering seems to go on forever. He said there are a lot of properties that never seem like they get into compliance in a reasonable amount of time and then the City ends up with a great deal of properties that don't comply for a lot of different reasons that don't hit a trigger that makes them get into compliance. City Attorney Shaver agreed, noting that there could be triggers on both sides and said the law only requires that a reasonable cost of recovery can be obtained. Ms. Trent said this will become more and more of an issue and said Staff and the focus group should take a look at those triggers and the grandfathered in items as well.

The third topic is multi-family development. Townhomes in particular are almost impossible to build under the existing City Code. She said the text amendments have been drafted and those were recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission. The amendments will be before Council for first reading September 6th. Assistant Community Development Director Kathy Portner

explained that the difference is measuring open space rather than minimum lot size.

Duncan McArthur, a developer with TML Enterprises, complimented Staff on their handling of the discussions. He explained the difficulties in the City Code to produce townhomes and how that affects borrower's availability in the lending industry.

Ms. Trent then covered the minimum lot size and dimensional standards. She said RSF-4 often cannot be built because of various constraints. She said discussions have taken place on adding additional zone districts, but changes to the requirements of the existing zone districts will cause a change of future developments. She asked Mr. John Davis, a developer, to elaborate.

John Davis, a developer with Blue Star Industries, stated that in looking at all the existing RSF-4 developments, none were built as four units per acre, the highest was 3.89 units per acre. He asked that the requirements for RSF-4 be made RSF-3 and then bring down the requirements for RSF-4. He wanted more options and with the high prices of homes in the area, he thought more density is needed. He said most buyers are from out of town because the in-town people cannot afford a medium priced home in this market. He thought his suggestion would help control the prices.

Councilmember Hill said he and Councilmember Palmer both supported that four years ago. He said that he understands the developers want to maximize the density which will make things more affordable and said that would be worth looking at.

Councilmember Palmer stated that RSF-4 zoning is intended to be a maximum, which does not guarantee results and said that he does not want to compromise open space and road width. He would like to pursue RSF-3.

Councilmember Coons said that she likes the idea of zoning to actual density and feels that it will help people know what they are really going to get in the end.

Ms. Trent said the landscaping code has been a continuing issue and said the Chamber has been involved in the discussions. She said Staff is trying to get more specific on what isn't liked. Ms. Trent said the landscaping code had a big overhaul in the year 2000 and again in 2002 as it related to industrial sites. She asked Diane Schwenke from the Chamber to address the comments she has heard.

Councilmember Hill questioned why the report only address I-O zone. Ms. Trent said the focus group only wanted to address I-O at this time.

Ms. Schwenke said more information needs to be gathered regarding the landscaping code. She said the #1 item that comes out of exit interviews with developers are the landscaping requirements. She said a lot of the issues are non-conforming sites and infill sites. She pointed out that there needs to be an effort to address specific issues and to educate the flexibility and xeriscaping options.

Councilmember Palmer agreed that there are issues with smaller industrial lots regarding what the landscaping requirements are and what is required according to the Code. He feels the City should look at industrial a little different, but does not want to exclude the landscaping requirements in certain areas just because no one drives by there. He feels the City should be more flexible with the options that are available.

Ms. Schwenke said the bottom line is that in certain areas there needs to be some flexibility or potential Code changes that would still let the community look nice and still let the business owner be able to operate.

Councilmember Palmer said the continuous request for variances tells Council there is a problem with the Code.

Ms. Schwenke suggested a point system that would allow the business owner the flexibility to meet a minimum number of plants. Ms. Trent said that a point system lacked consistency.

Councilmember Beckstein questioned why not require native trees and plants that are adaptable to this area. Ms. Trent said the Code already states that and said actually xeriscaping is more expensive initially but will pay back later with a lower maintenance cost.

Councilmember Hill said the parking is the issue because the businesses have to use part of their parking lots for landscaping. He said the flexibility is there but it also affects other things on the non-conforming sites.

Ms. Trent said there is a need to do more outreach and education on the options. She questioned if Council would like I-O to be looked at.

Councilmember Spehar said I-O is different than industrial office situations. He said maybe Council should be looking at the parking side of the issue instead of the landscaping issues. He would like to see ways to deal with the reuse of big box buildings and the need for a variety of affordable housing. He said regarding the zone district issue, there are concerns of having a zone for every number. He would like to deal with the variances and acknowledge the issue but balance the needs.

Councilmember Coons would like to encourage the focus group to determine the real issues with the landscaping.

Ms. Trent said Larry Rasmussen would like to speak to Council.

Larry Rasmussen with AMGD, representing builders, realtors, and contractors, said he would like to echo all of the comments that have been made and is pleased with all of the discussions so far. He said there are a couple of issues regarding the conflict between the process from the preliminary to the final plan. He said there have been discussions regarding the review process and the time elements and said that he would like to continue to perform the exit interviews and track the comments.

Ms. Trent said Rebecca Wilmarth also would like to address Council.

Rebecca Wilmarth, Sharper Engineering, thanked Staff for all of their work with the focus group.

Councilmember Spehar said that he appreciates all of the great strides the focus group has made and asked that they keep up the good work.

Councilmember Hill said that he hopes this Council can set the tone to continue to adjust the Code to make this community great. He said this is a long term process and Staff needs to look at all of the angles.

Council President Doody questioned if the main issue is the cost of the landscaping. Ms. Trent said most of the comments is that it is too onerous for the desert and is too expensive, but most of all the quantity that is expected is the biggest issue.

Action summary: Council thanked Staff and the focus group for all of their comments on this issue and wanted Staff to keep Council informed of their findings.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

