

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL  
WORKSHOP SUMMARY  
April 30, 2007**

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction, Colorado met on Monday, April 30, 2007 at 7:07 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium to discuss workshop items. Those present were Councilmembers Teresa Coons, Bruce Hill, Gregg Palmer, Jim Spehar, Doug Thomason, and Council President Jim Doody. Councilmember Bonnie Beckstein was absent.

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

1. **INFILL/REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:** Tim Moore, Director of Public Works and Planning, introduced the review of the Infill/Redevelopment program. He deferred to Ivy Williams, Development Services Supervisor, to present the topic. She reviewed the history of the policy, including the goals and policies from the Strategic Plan from which the policy was initiated. Since adoption there have been 21 applications, thirteen were not accepted as they did not meet the definitions. Five projects were approved with the incentives ranging from \$3,000 to \$105,000. There are three applications pending. There was one application, Fairmount Hall on 12<sup>th</sup> Street; for which the request was granted despite there being a structure existing on the property which is one of the exclusions. It was granted because it was thought that the request met the intent of the policy. The policy minimum acreage is two acres but there have been applications for slightly smaller parcels that could qualify under the intent. Ms. Williams referred to a list of considerations for Council. The first consideration was a review of the current incentives.

Councilmember Palmer stated it was his intent not to preclude a qualified parcel just on the basis of an existing structure on a small portion of the property.

Councilmember Spehar agreed.

Councilmember Coons suggested a separate discussion between infill and redevelopment. For redevelopment, she did not feel a two acre minimum should be the hard and fast rule.

Councilmember Palmer agreed noting it should be the project itself; the purpose is troubled vacant land and infill pieces. Regarding redevelopment, it is the opportunity to change a site that is unsightly or unusable, but not to subsidize remodels. It is better to set accurate expectations.

Councilmember Spehar agreed; the purpose is not to help pay for a new roof. Regarding the two acre limit, he thought one less than two acres came before them previously. Ms. Williams responded that it was probably an infill project where there is no acreage requirement.

Councilmember Spehar noted that a requirement that the incentive had to provide for a public benefit was adopted later, which avoids the maintenance and design feature requests.

Councilmember Hill agreed. He recalled the discussions during the development of this policy; the Strategic Plan goals urged the adoption of the policy but trying to focus the policy was difficult. There are still other barriers. Making a difficult site easier to develop and make that flexibility available to all applicants are two barriers. Trying to tweak something that isn't working is not the best track; the incentives are only available to a few.

Councilmember Palmer pointed out that Council knew the program was going to be a work in process. Making infill/development easier is a good idea, but this program is for the projects that are particularly tricky.

Councilmember Spehar disagreed with abandoning the policy altogether.

Councilmember Hill likened the policy to the traffic calming policy which was very awkward. The thing the City is doing already is making things better for business. Ms. Williams agreed noting the newly adopted Code changes help some of those situations.

City Manager Varley noted that it is a good discussion; the intent is to change behavior but this program has thus far not proven to be the case.

City Attorney Shaver noted the reason for the acreage limitation was to encourage assemblage of parcels.

Councilmember Spehar expressed that it does appear that the program is not working and another tact needs to be taken.

Councilmember Palmer pointed out that there are still a number of smaller parcels that still are not developed and keeping the policy adds one more tool to the toolbox for such developments.

Councilmember Hill asked if the tool exists without the policy; such as with a variance. City Attorney Shaver said yes and prior to the policy there were such occasional situations. Because of those occasional requests, the policy was developed to treat them uniformly which doesn't happen as they are typically addressed on a case by case basis. Councilmember Hill suggested taking the \$250,000 per year budgeted for the program and investing it in the community instead.

Councilmember Palmer said the City is doing that anyway, evidenced by the growth but the policy advertises to the developers there is relief for developing difficult properties.

Councilmember Hill countered that they are not hearing the need for the policy from the development community.

Councilmember Spehar, rethinking his position, felt the policy has been received with a resounding “yawn” so there is probably a better use of the funds.

Councilmember Coons felt that developers are thinking up things to ask for incentives.

Ms. Williams reviewed some of the pending applications. She felt they may meet the intent more than some in the past.

Councilmember Coons asked if the Planning Department has provided some education so that requests are more in-line with the intent. Ms. Williams said not that she knows of but they have worked with the Development Engineers and the Planners to gather comments from developers who are provided information on the policy.

Council President Doody thought the policy is a great tool as it promotes creativity. The policy being so loose has caused some issues but the policy just needs to be nurtured.

Ms. Williams suggested the density bonus incentive should be removed as it already exists in the Code. Councilmember Spehar advised, if it is duplicative, he has no problem removing it.

Ms. Williams pointed out that expedited review would be difficult with current work load. Councilmember Spehar agreed, noting something else would have to be put aside to expedite an application.

Ms. Williams asked if Council would be willing to place a time limit on the use of the funds and this could be extended if requested. Ms. Williams suggested a two-year time limit.

Councilmember Spehar agreed as long as there is an option for an extension. He suggested the three pending applications come through the process and then Council can make a decision on the continuation of the policy, making these minor changes.

**Action summary:** City Council agreed to allow the three pending applications to come through the process and in the meantime to make the minor adjustments to the policy: deleting density bonuses and expedited review from the list of incentives and to place a time frame for use of the funds once granted, with an option to renew.

Council President Doody called a recess at 8:29 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:37 p.m.

2. **MOUNTAIN RAIL FOR I-70 CORRIDOR:** Tim Moore, Director of Public Works and Planning, provided Council with the history of the Rocky Mountain Rail Authority and the Colorado Rail Association and reviewed the current goals of the organization. CDOT has applied for a grant for a feasibility study for the 11<sup>th</sup> corridor and they need 20% match for the grant plus some more funding to manage the grant. Twenty percent of the grant is \$311,500, which has been raised. The thought is to place a question on the ballot to form a statewide authority to fund a rail system in 2008.

Council President Doody advised that the non-profit organization needs some funding for their travel and to provide education on this proposal. With all the congestion, it may be time to consider another mode of transportation for the I-70 corridor.

Councilmember Coons said it appears that the I-70 Corridor group and the Rail group are working against each other. She asked if there is any thought of getting these two groups together.

City Manager Varley was involved in some of these discussions back when they were first being developed, under the old ISTEA program. He has had conversations with some of the organizers and they have offered to come to speak and clarify their position and also include members from the other groups. Dr. Flo Raitano was a name mentioned.

Council President Doody advised there is no pressure for the City to provide any funds but the Rail group does ask that Council keep up and be at the table.

Councilmember Coons said she is interested in pursuing the feasibility of rail but would like to wait until hearing Dr. Flo Raitano first.

Councilmember Spehar agreed, he sees it being some time before rail is brought out this far west.

Councilmember Palmer agreed, pointing out they have the funding they need now and it appears this is way out in the future.

Councilmember Hill noted that transportation is in peril in Colorado and he agrees with being at the table to help solve Colorado's transportation problem.

Councilmember Spehar agreed and felt the statement that a ballot measure in 2008 is unrealistic.

Councilmember Thomason questioned whether a seat at the table provided any benefit.

**Action summary:** Council President Doody recognized the good discussion but there was not resolution at this time.

- 3. PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:** Council President Doody reviewed a proposed resolution asking Mesa County Commissioners to initiate the process to increase the number of their members. He discussed some of the concerns the other Town Boards and City Councils have. They do not feel they have sufficient representation on the Board of County Commissioners. The elected Commissioners many times come from within the City of Grand Junction so the other municipalities do not feel they have sufficient representation.

Councilmember Thomason asked if there is opposition to the proposal.

Council President Doody said he hasn't heard a grassroots swell for the change.

Councilmember Palmer said he has. He doesn't have a problem with an increase. Five is probably a better number but he would be concerned with how they are elected.

Councilmember Hill said once the population reaches a certain point, State Law allows for five Commissioners. The reality is that all five of them may come from the City. Currently all three districts are elected at large. Regardless of whether there are Commissioners in Palisade and Fruita, they will still need to be in town for public hearings. There will be costs. He would support the resolution to put the question before the constituents.

Councilmember Coons agreed about taking it to a vote. However, since the reason is for representation from Fruita and Palisade, if the Commissioner is elected from those two districts, they are being elected by a much smaller population versus at large; they will probably be from the City. She has no problem supporting the resolution.

Councilmember Spehar said unless the County goes home-rule, the representatives will have to be elected at-large. This issue has come up several times before and held up over the home rule issue. He felt it would be impossible to design districts to create rural Commissioners due to population requirements. However, he sees value in more opinions on the board. The measure will probably get bogged down in costs and salaries, but he would support the resolution.

Councilmember Thomason said he would support the resolution to place the question before the voters.

**Action summary:** City Council directed staff to place the resolution on the Wednesday meeting agenda.

## ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.