

**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 18, 2017**

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction convened into regular session on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. Those present were Councilmembers Bennett Boeschstein, Chris Kennedy, Duncan McArthur, Rick Taggart, Barbara Traylor Smith, Martin Chazen, and Council President Phyllis Norris. Also present were City Manager Greg Caton, City Attorney John Shaver, and City Clerk Stephanie Tuin.

Council President Norris called the meeting to order. Councilmember Traylor Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance which was followed by an invocation by Father Donald Malin, Mesa Catholic Campus Ministry Coordinator.

**Presentation**

Darcy Johnson, Chair of the Commission on Arts and Culture, provided background on the Champion of the Arts Award program since 1996, and advised that they annually invite the community to nominate local businesses, organizations, and individuals for this Award. These awards are given each year to honor businesses, organizations, and individuals which exemplify outstanding support for the arts, assistance to local art and cultural organizations, commitment to the cultural community, and/or promotion of area artists. Original artwork from premier local artists are presented as the award.

The Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture chose Dr. Michael Neste and Family Health West as this year's Champion of the Arts Award recipient. Dr. Neste and Family Health West were nominated by Marnie Warner with High Desert Opera. The original artwork presented, Ascension, was painted by local artist Mary Mansfield.

Ms. Johnson introduced Dr. Michael Neste. Dr. Neste thanked the Commission on Arts and Culture and then described how the Avalon Theatre Project began which inspired him to contribute to the arts in the community. He encouraged the City to continue to support the arts.

**Proclamation**

Councilmember Chazen read the proclamation. Chalane Coit, Crime Stoppers Vice Chair, and Shari Zen, Crimestoppers Board Chair, were present to accept the proclamation. Ms. Coit described how Crimestoppers has helped the community prevent and solve crimes. She thanked the Council for the proclamation.

**Appointments**

Councilmember Taggart moved to appoint Britt Mathwich and Tim Pollard and reappoint Kevin Reimer to the Visitor and Convention Bureau Board of Directors for three year terms expiring December 2019. Councilmember Traylor Smith seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

**To the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

Councilmember Kennedy moved to appoint Gary Schroen to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to fill an unexpired term until June 2018. Councilmember Chazen seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Certificate of Appointments****To the Horizon Drive Association Business Improvement District Board**

Linda Romer Todd was present to accept her certificate of appointment to the Horizon Drive Association Business Improvement District Board. Ms. Todd thanked Council for the appointment.

**To the Planning Commission**

Bill Wade and Keith Ehlers were present to accept their certificates of reappointment to the Planning Commission. Mr. Wade and Mr. Ehlers thanked Council for their reappointment.

**Citizens Comments**

Bruce Lohmiller, 3032 North 15<sup>th</sup> Street, #208, spoke about the Veteran's Regional Art Show at the Whitman Building and the Governor's announcement relative to drugs and the drug, Marinol. He expressed concern for young people having issues and encouraged them to call 9-1-1 for assistance.

**Council Reports**

Councilmember Taggart stated between January 1<sup>st</sup> through January 18<sup>th</sup> he attended the Grand Junction Regional Airport Task Force meeting; the Visitor and Convention Bureau Board (VCB) interviews for open board positions; the Grand Junction Economic Partners (GJEP) meeting; and the Grand Junction Regional Airport Authority meeting.

Councilmember Traylor Smith provided information for the Fostering Hope forum and foster parent orientation on January 19<sup>th</sup>. She congratulated the Parks and Recreation Department for their inclusion in a State Parks annual calendar. Councilmember Traylor Smith attended a GJEP meeting with the Grand Junction Event Center committee and encouraged dialog regarding the importance of the Event Center to the community.

Councilmember Kennedy thanked Council President Norris for attending the Martin Luther King, Jr. activities on January 16<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged participation in the Women's March on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

Councilmember Chazen attended the VCB meeting on January 10<sup>th</sup>, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA)/Downtown Grand Junction Business Improvement District (DGJBID) meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>, and the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) meeting on January 17<sup>th</sup>.

Councilmember Boeschstein announced the Riverfront Commission will be going to a bi-monthly schedule in 2017. He attended a Council senior staff member evaluation on January 6<sup>th</sup> and on January 14<sup>th</sup> he met with Jim Jordan of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society regarding the restoration of the City's historic railroad depot.

Councilmember McArthur said on January 10<sup>th</sup> he attended the swearing in of reelected Mesa County Commissioners. He announced the B ½ Road overpass is now open.

Council President Norris attended the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration and read the proclamation on January 16<sup>th</sup>. She attended an open house with GJEP on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Consent Agenda**

Councilmember Kennedy moved to adopt the Consent Agenda items #1 through #3. Councilmember Boeschstein seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

#### **1. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Summary of the December 19, 2016 Workshop
- b. Minutes of the December 21, 2016 Regular Meeting
- c. Minutes of the January 6, 2017 Special Session

#### **2. Contracts/Other Action Items**

- a. Lease Agreement for Farming Rights for Matchett Park Property
- b. Lease Agreement for Farming Rights for Saccomanno Park Property

- c. Purchase a 2017 Volvo L-90H 3.5 Cubic Yard Wheeled Front End Loader

### 3. Resolutions

- a. Resolution No. 04-17 – A Resolution Amending the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture Bylaws
- b. Resolution No. 05-17 – A Resolution Amending the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Bylaws
- c. Resolution No. 06-17 – A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Submit a Grant Request to the Mesa County Federal Mineral Lease District for Replacement of Stocker Stadium Turf
- d. Resolution No. 07-17 – A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Submit a Grant Request to the Department of Local Affairs for the 911 System Project
- e. Resolution No. 08-17 – A Resolution Supporting the Grant Application for a Local Parks and Outdoor Recreation Grant from the State Board of the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund and the Completion of Outdoor STEM Classroom and Play Space for the Math and Science Center

**Public Hearing – Ordinance No. 4733 – An Ordinance Adopting Amendments to the 2012 Edition of the International Fire Code and Prescribing Regulations Governing Outdoor Burning Including Prohibited, Restricted and Unrestricted Burning; Providing for the Issuance of Permits for Certain Burning Activities and Defining Extinguishment Authority**

Outdoor burning, including open burning and recreational fires has been a topic for City Council consideration. Research by staff is recommending an ordinance to restrict outdoor burning within City limits as a matter of public safety.

The public hearing was opened at 7:42 p.m.

Fire Chief Ken Watkins introduced Fire Marshall Chuck Mathis and then reviewed the history of this topic. He asked Fire Marshall Mathis to explained the ordinance amendments.

Fire Marshall Mathis clarified the definition of portable and built-in fire pits. He stated Ordinance No. 4733 addresses open burning on larger properties and proposed a one acre cut off for the allowance of open burning. Fire Marshall Mathis gave instructions on how to determine the lot size of a property and if the property is located within the City limits. He then deferred to Chief Watkins.

Chief Watkins said they have been in contact with Mesa County Health Department and recommended the City Fire Department to continue to issue burn permits within the City limits and Mesa County to issue burn permits outside the City limits.

Chief Watkins identified the key changes proposed in the ordinance. He listed the three main categories: prohibited; restricted; and unrestricted burning with different types of burning listed under each section. He said other changes include an allowance for leaf burning up to three cubic feet for larger properties and a shorter burn season. He provided alternate options for removal of green waste. He stated if the proposal passes there will be a slight increase in the fire permit revenue from proposed 2017 budgeted amount due to an increase in number of permits. He noted the ordinance is not designed to improve air quality but to increase public safety and to reduce nuisance burning and community complaints.

Councilmember Kennedy asked how the length of a burn season is determined. Chief Watkins said the burn season is determined by the City of Grand Junction Fire Department and is dependent on weather conditions. Councilmember Kennedy asked what the penalty is for violating the burn ordinance. City Attorney Shaver said the majority of violations will be dealt with proactively and issuing a ticket would be the last resort. He said this is usually approached as an opportunity for education regarding fire safety, however, a fine for a violation could be as high as \$1,000.

Councilmember Kennedy thanked the Fire Department for clarifying the definition of a fire pit.

Councilmember Traylor Smith asked for clarification on the fine potential and the possibility of jail time for violating this ordinance. City Attorney Shaver stated there could be a possibility for jail time for an ordinance violation but it would not be expected.

Councilmember Traylor Smith thanked the Fire Department for clarifying it is a public safety issue and not an air quality issue. She asked if the number of permits will decrease and the number of unpermitted burns will increase. Chief Watkins said there was a possibility the number of issued permits will decrease and the number of unpermitted burns will also increase. Councilmember Traylor Smith said some citizens may have difficulty finding alternatives for green waste disposal. She said it may be an opportunity to educate rather than issue a ticket.

Councilmember Boeschstein thanked the staff for presenting the ordinance. He said the real issue in his neighborhood is fire safety and he will support the ordinance.

Councilmember McArthur said he agrees with the City issuing burn permits for properties located within the City limits.

Councilmember Chazen asked if there are any provisions for properties smaller than one acre that have an abundance of noxious weeds.

Chief Watkins said there are no current exceptions in place for the smaller properties. City Attorney Shaver stated the criteria was not developed for exceptions but there could be a possibility for an appeal of the decision.

Councilmember Chazen asked if there could be an alternative option for smaller properties with a weed abundance. City Attorney Shaver said Council can adjust the break point to a one half acre property size or give direction to develop criteria, but it would be a complicated process. City Attorney Shaver said Council could add a review time frame.

Councilmember Kennedy asked if there is legal recourse a property owner could take with property less than one acre and adjacent to an unmaintained weed-filled larger property. City Attorney Shaver said yes, there are weed controls in place within the City limits.

Council President Norris asked what the cost is for green waste special pickups. Chief Watson stated the fees for loose, bagged, dumpster, and yard container green waste collection.

Council President Norris stated the comment time for public comments will have a limit of three minutes per citizen.

Fredrick Walker, no address provided, said he was a retired internal medicine physician and referred to Dr. Scott's comments from a previous Council meeting. He endorses the efforts to restrict burning on the basis of cleaner air and health issues.

Charlie Post, 653 North Terrace Drive, said his property is just outside the City limits and is affected by poor air quality. He said he does not burn waste and has it removed with his regular trash pick-up. He stated the ordinance is not just an air quality issue but also a fire safety issue. He urged Council to pass the ordinance.

Peggy Rawlins, 519 Liberty Cap Court, stated she is a member of the Citizens for Clean Air (CCA). She urged the Council to remove the approval for leaf burning from the ordinance and thanked the staff and Council for their efforts.

Kristin Winn, 713 Ivanhoe Way, stated she is a member of CCA. She thanked Council for their efforts and asked for the approval of leaf burning be removed from the ordinance. She stated Mesa County has a ban on leaf burning and thanked the staff for their efforts towards cleaner air in the City.

Steven Solvara, 3581 G Road, Palisade, said the air quality during burn season is reduced and the quality of life is lowered due to lack of clean air. He thanked Council.

Jim Baughman, 2579 Patterson Road, said he attended the November Council meeting where the clean air ordinance was discussed and is pleased with the clean air ordinance being proposed. He stated his property is solely accessed from Patterson Road and leaf pickup is not an option for his property. He wanted Council to be aware that there are properties like his that do not have leaf pick-up as an option for green waste disposal.

Bruce Baughman, 2579 Patterson Road, asked if the burn season would be consecutive without a break in the spring. Chief Watkins said the burn season will run the full two months, depending on the weather. He stated the Fire Marshall will announce when the burn season will start.

Karen Sjoberg, 514 Rado Drive, read a statement written by Barbara Lee of 360 Northridge Drive, which urged Council to adopt the burn ordinance (attached).

Charles Pope, 267 Laurel Lee Avenue, Environmental Safety Manager for Mesa County School District 51, stated School District 51 has had to shut down HVAC units due to smoke coming into the buildings from open burns on nearby properties. He expressed concern regarding the air quality in the schools and asked Council to consider not burning during school hours.

Charles Kerr, 888 Quail Run Drive, thanked Council for moving towards clean air quality and gave statistics on air pollution in the City. She encouraged Council to not pass the ordinance section regarding burning leaves.

Michael Day, 1676 Fowler Drive, Fruita, stated his concerns regarding enforcement of the clean air ordinance. He said the current laws are not enforced and believes this ordinance is nothing more than an attempt to eliminate the use of fire pits. He urged Council to not pass this ordinance and provide the Fire Department with the means to enforce the existing laws regarding clean air and burn permits.

There were no other public comments.

The public hearing was closed at 9:03 p.m.

Councilmember Taggart said he would like to see a provision added for review of this ordinance within a two-year period.

City Attorney Shaver said yes, a two-year review could be added as an addendum.

Councilmember Kennedy asked about the discrepancies between the City and the County leaf burning policies. He stated the County does not allow leaf burning and this ordinance allows leaf burning within the City for properties over an acre in size. He asked how the allowance of leaf burning is compliant with fire safety.

City Attorney Shaver said the County ban on leaf burning is specifically in place for air pollution control and this City ordinance is specifically for fire safety. He stated the County resolution is a fundamental legal question; air quality versus fire safety.

Chief Watkins said the Fire Code regarding leaf burning is allowed on the larger properties with the leaf pile being three cubic feet in diameter.

Councilmember Kennedy asked if there could be a motion to remove certain sections from the ordinance. City Attorney Shaver said yes.

Councilmember Kennedy moved to strike the leaf burning language from the proposed ordinance. The motion died as no one seconded the motion.

Councilmember Traylor Smith stated the number of burn permits will be reduced for the City not the County. She emphasized the importance of working with School District 51 on burning when school is not in session. She stated there is a need to keep cost effective alternative green waste disposal as an option for open burning.

Councilmember McArthur stated he appreciates having a burn ordinance that can be enforced. He said he supports this ordinance and committed to continuing to review it.

Councilmember Chazen expressed concerned about enforcement but will support the ordinance. He said the City Fire Department has a responsibility towards public education regarding burn permits and allowable open burning.

Councilmember Taggart moved to adopt Ordinance No. 4733 – An Ordinance Adopting Amendments to the 2012 Edition of the International Fire Code and Prescribing Regulations Governing Outdoor Burning Including Prohibited, Restricted and Unrestricted Burning; Providing for the Issuance of Permits for Certain Burning Activities and Defining Extinguishment Authority on final passage and ordered final publication in pamphlet form. Councilmember McArthur seconded the Motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

Councilmember Traylor Smith asked if staff can report back to Council once the ordinance is implemented. Council President Norris asked City Manager Caton if staff can report to Council after two burning seasons. City Manager Caton said yes, there will be an annual report back to Council regarding this ordinance.

The Council took a break at 9:28 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 9:33 p.m.

When Council resumed, Councilmember Taggart had left the meeting due to illness.



**Public Hearing – McHugh Annexation, Located at 115 Vista Grande Road**

A request to annex and zone 1.20 +/- acres from County RSF-4 (Residential Single Family - 4 du/ac) to a City R-4 (Residential - 4 du/ac) zone district, located at 115 Vista Grande Road, in order to re-subdivide the existing platted property to create one additional lot.

The public hearing was opened at 9:35 p.m.

Senior Planner Scott D. Peterson said the property owners requested annexation into the City limits and a zoning of R-4 (Residential - 4 du/ac) in order to re-subdivide the existing platted property to create a second residential lot in anticipation of future single-family residential development. Under the 1998 Persigo Agreement with Mesa County, residential development within the Persigo Wastewater Treatment Facility boundary (201 service area) triggers land use review and annexation by the City. The proposed zoning of R-4 implements the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map, which has designated the property as Residential Medium Low (2 - 4 du/ac). The request meets the rezone criteria in the Zoning and Development Code.

Councilmember McArthur asked if this request is to divide one lot into two lots on a 1.2-acre site. Mr. Peterson answered yes. Councilmember McArthur stated this property is zoned R-4 and asked if there may be a request for additional division of these lots in the future. Mr. Peterson said re-subdivision is possible, however, it would depend on where the home is built on the property.

Councilmember McArthur asked if the Comprehensive Plan anticipates the surrounding property being rezoned R-4. Mr. Peterson said yes, the property to the west of Vista Grande is anticipated to be zoned R-4. Mr. Peterson stated the surrounding lots are still in the County. The City will need to annex two feet of the Highway 340 right-of-way as well as the entire width of the Vista Grande right-of-way. He said the Persigo agreement requires annexation for development to occur.

Councilmember Chazen asked if the proposed annexation down Broadway will be maintained by Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Mr. Peterson said CDOT will maintain Highway 340 but to bring Vista Grande up to City standards the cost would be about \$16,000.

Council President Norris asked if the County will participate in this expense. City Attorney Shaver said no. City Manager Caton clarified that the maintenance cost to the City is estimated at \$16,000; to bring the roadway up to City standards would cost around \$177,000. She asked if the City turns down the annexation request, could the request go forward under the County jurisdiction. City Attorney Shaver said if this property is to be developed, it has to be done through the City. Council President Norris

noted there will be a cost to the City to annex this property including a reduction in the Rural Fire District payment and a cost for the roadway.

Councilmember Kennedy asked if the annexations figures are calculated into the operation budget and are there any future annexations near this property.

City Attorney Shaver said this was previously done on an annual basis, however the growth and development is not as large as in the past. Mr. Peterson said at this time no surrounding properties have been annexed into the City.

Council President Norris asked for public comments.

There were none.

The public hearing was closed at 9:48 p.m.

Councilmember Traylor Smith moved to adopt Resolution No. 09-17 – A Resolution Accepting a Petition for the Annexation of Lands to the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, Making Certain Findings, and Determining that Property Known as the McHugh Annexation, Located at 115 Vista Grande Road, is Eligible for Annexation, Ordinance No. 4734 – An Ordinance Annexing Territory to the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, McHugh Annexation, Located at 115 Vista Grande Road, Consisting of One Parcel of Land, and 0.49 Acres of Broadway (Hwy. 340) and Vista Grande Road Rights-of-Way, and Ordinance No. 4735 – An Ordinance zoning the McHugh Annexation to R-4 (Residential - 4 du/ac Located at 115 Vista Grande Road on final passage and ordered final publication in pamphlet form. Councilmember Boeschenstein seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

### **Public Hearing – Freedom Heights Annexation, Public Right-of-Way for 26 Road, Located North of H Road**

A request to annex 0.640 acres of 26 Road Right-of-Way.

The public hearing was opened at 9:50 p.m.

Senior Planner Scott Peterson explained during the process of reviewing the Freedom Heights Subdivision, located at 818 26 Road, it was discovered that the 26 Road right-of-way adjacent to the property had not been annexed as a part of the Pomona Park Annexation in 1995 as it should have been since the property description extended to the center of the right-of-way. The annexation of approximately 900 feet of the east half of the 26 Road right-of-way corrects the error. The strip of land will be dedicated as right-of-way with the recording of the Freedom Heights Subdivision plat.

Councilmember Kennedy asked if everything on that section of 26 Road is split by jurisdiction. Mr. Peterson said everything west of 26 Road is still in Mesa County's jurisdiction. City Manager Caton stated this is not the only situation that has a split jurisdiction.

Councilmember Chazen stated that this corrects an annexation error on the east side of 26 Road.

Councilmember McArthur asked what the consequences would be if this were not annexed. City Attorney Shaver said there was a defect in the description which should have been to the center of the road and this ordinance will correct the error.

Councilmember McArthur asked if the County has been maintaining the road. City Attorney Shaver said yes.

Councilmember McArthur asked if this past annexation was completed in 1995. City Attorney Shaver answered yes. City Attorney Shaver said the concern is to make sure there is a correct legal description for the development review which currently has a defect.

Councilmember Kennedy asked how this error was discovered. Mr. Peterson said as the survey was completed and researched, the error was discovered.

Council President Norris asked for public comments.

There were none.

The public hearing was closed 9:59 p.m.

Councilmember Kennedy moved to adopt Resolution No. 10-17 – A Resolution Accepting a Petition for the Annexation of Lands to the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, Making Certain Findings, and Determining that Right-of-Way Known as the Freedom Heights Annexation, Approximately 0.640 Acres of Public Right-of-Way for 26 Road Located North of H Road, is eligible for Annexation and Ordinance No. 4736 – An Ordinance Annexing Territory to the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, Freedom Heights Annexation, Approximately 0.640 Acres of Public Right-of-Way for 26 Road, Located North of H Road, on final passage and ordered final publication in pamphlet form. Councilmember Chazen seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Resolution No. 11-17 – A Resolution Approving Master Plan 2017 for St. Mary's Hospital and Environs, Located at 2635 North 7th Street**

A request to approve an Institutional and Civic Master Plan for St. Mary's Hospital for properties that they own on a total of 51 +/- acres. The Plan sets forth the vision for

planned upgrades, improvement and expansion to St. Mary's facilities and campus area for the next 5 years.

Senior Planner Scott D. Peterson said in an effort to avoid approving hospital expansions in a piecemeal fashion and at the direction of the Grand Junction Planning Commission, St. Mary's Hospital prepared its first Master Plan in 1995. The purpose of the Plan was to set forth the vision for upgrades, improvements, and expansions to St. Mary's facilities and campus area over a 5-year period and to allow the Planning Commission an opportunity to consider the proposed improvements in a comprehensive manner. The Master Plan 2017 approved the construction to continue for the interior remodel; demolish the buildings at 2320 and 2323 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street; renovate and add new construction of an additional 40,000 square feet for the Cardiac Center; add new construction of an additional 14,000 square feet for the Hybrid Operating Room; and study the idea of constructing an additional 51,000 square feet for the Laboratory and Pharmacy expansions. There are no additional plans to do a further traffic study. St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center officials have met with the surrounding neighborhoods. The Planning Commission recommended approval. The applicant was present to answer questions.

Councilmember Boeschstein thanked St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center for being at the Council meeting and bringing their Master Plan forward. He asked about the future intention of the Life Center building now that it is closed.

Dr. Brian Davidson, President of St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center, said the Life Center was not closed and is still fully functional. He stated only the gym and therapy pool were closed with the rest of the Life Center in full use.

Councilmember McAuthur thanked St. Mary's for the care he received and commented that several former Life Center members are now attending Golds Gym.

Councilmember Traylor Smith asked why are they tearing down the buildings. Mr. Davidson stated their cost analysis indicated it would be cost effective to demolish buildings rather than remodel.

Councilmember Kennedy asked what the projected economic impact of St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center is in the next five years. Dr. Davidson said, subject to annual approval, the Cardiac Center is estimated to bring \$48 million and capital improvements are projected to be \$184 million to the community over the next three years.

Council President Norris stated St. Mary's Hospital and Medical Center is a regional draw for the valley.

Councilmember Chazen thanked St. Mary's Hospital for all they have done, the services provided and offered, and their investment in the community.

Council President Norris stated she once served on the Hospital's board of directors, however, based on disclosure, does not believe there is a conflict.

Councilmember Boeschstein moved to adopt Resolution No. 11-17 – A Resolution Approving Master Plan 2017 for St. Mary's Hospital and Environs, Located at 2635 North 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Councilmember Kennedy seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.

### **Non-Scheduled Citizens & Visitors**

There were none.

### **Other Business**

The was none.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

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Stephanie Tuin, MMC  
City Clerk

**BARBARA LEE**  
**360 Northridge Drive**  
**Grand Junction, 81506**

I moved back to GJ recently from the Bitterroot Valley of Montana.

Last Monday afternoon, I observed a young boy carrying sign that he had made for the Martin Luther King symbolic walk in downtown GJ. It read, "Our lives begin to end, the day we are silent about the things that matter."

Ladies and Gentlemen...  
the quality of the air we breathe does matter.

I am ashamed to admit, that I was silent for too long when I lived in what many people believe is one of the most beautiful places in Montana. I was silent while I watched the air quality deteriorate slowly...insidiously, year after year...until it was too late. Too late because, although I knew it was affecting many older folks and children.....eventually, it affected me.

I became the "canary in the mine shaft." Every time there was an inversion or my neighbor burned leaves, I quickly became inflamed and ultimately had to go on supplemental oxygen to breathe.

Despite a very healthy athletic heart and lungs, I developed an acute sensitivity to smoke of any kind, and, had no choice but to leave Montana. Yes, the Bitterroot Mountains are still beautiful, but the air quality is not because no one was paying attention.

I am very happy to have returned to GJ where I have a memories, a history, and wonderful redrock trails to hike...when the air is smoke free.

I am, however, ashamed I was silent about something that mattered before my days in the Bitterroot were over.

I don't want to make that mistake here.

The deterioration in GJ's air quality this fall when folks burned their leaves made it difficult for me to go outside and walk in the sunshine. The smoke from one small burning pile joined that from another...and another, rising in the air until it triggered my personal critical mass, and I needed supplemental oxygen again...right here in Grand Junction. I was so disappointed.

But, my story is not the important one. The real story is the children whose young lungs are slowly, imperceptively being sensitized despite their parents loving efforts to keep them safe and living in healthy environments. The air quality is not something many parents and children have much control over...

BUT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... YOU DO.

So despite my absence at this hearing, I urge you to adopt the regulations being requested by the Citizens for Clean Air.

*Barbara Lee*