

## **GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL**

### **SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES**

**JUNE 29, 2012**

The City Council of the City of Grand Junction, Colorado met in Emergency Special Session on Friday, June 29, 2012 at 5:32 p.m. in the Administration Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 250 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Those present were Councilmembers Bennett Boeschstein, Tom Kenyon, Laura Luke, and President of the Council Bill Pitts. Absent were Councilmembers Teresa Coons, Jim Doody, and Sam Susuras. Also present were Fire Chief Ken Watkins, Assistant City Attorney Jamie Beard, and City Clerk Stephanie Tuin.

Council President Pitts called the meeting to order.

Fire Chief Ken Watkins stated that the option of banning the sale of fireworks has been evaluated over the last several weeks and that day it had been discussed in detail with the County going to Stage 2 Restrictions. The possibility of a ban has become more urgent as things progressed with the nearby fire (Pine Ridge Fire in the DeBeque area). The area Fire Chiefs have participated in a briefing and felt it to be a good idea to ban the sale of fireworks. The Fire Department has had a lot of communication with the community, especially with the Governor's ban on the use of fireworks in the State. The Fire Department has fielded a lot of questions on banning the sales of fireworks. Although a few fireworks vendors have applied for permits, only one had the inspection conducted for the issuance of a permit.

Council President Pitts stated he was at the meeting and based on the reports given, he felt it was not prudent to go forward with allowing the sale of fireworks. The County is in concurrence with the ban.

Councilmember Luke asked for confirmation that the County will also be banning the sale of fireworks. Assistant City Attorney Beard said that was her understanding.

Chief Watkins advised the County Administrator was working on getting in contact with the County Commissioners.

Councilmember Boeschstein inquired if the City of Fruita will also be banning the sale. Chief Watkins was not sure if they would be.

Councilmember Kenyon referred to the outpouring of emotion with the fires across the State and that it made no sense to go forward with the sale of fireworks. The City's firework display would have been safe; it was more about providing leadership in not setting off fireworks and being sensitive to the fire issues around the State. Both Councilmember Bennett and Luke were in agreement.

Chief Watkins stated that the Type II Incident Command Unit is appreciative of the City imposing the ban what with the already stretched resources.

Councilmember Kenyon inquired as to how long the ban will be in effect. Assistant City Attorney Beard said it will be in effect until lifted. At that time, the City Council can vote to extend the ban but the Fire Chief does have the authority to lift the ban without Council action.

Council President Pitts noted that the Lightning Strike Team put out three or four fires the day before.

Councilmember Kenyon moved to ban the sale of fireworks and to support the order of the Fire Chief which states "The Fire Chief of the City of Grand Junction Ken Watkins pursuant to the Grand Junction Municipal Code and the 2012 International Fire Code is authorized to take necessary action in the reasonable performance of his duty in emergencies to protect life and property. Due to the continuing high to extreme high fire hazard conditions and the stretching of resources around the State for combating of fires, the Fire Chief with the exercise of his authority by this order directs that all sale of fireworks CEASE AND DESIST. No permits shall issue for the same and any previously issued permits are void. Violators are subject to penalties as provided by law. This order is effective immediately". (June 29, 2012). Councilmember Luke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Councilmember Kenyon asked if some of the lightning fires are being allowed to burn. Chief Watkins advised that sometimes fires are used as a management tool and the areas where that would happen are identified in advanced. However, due to the extreme conditions, there is less of that this year.

Councilmember Kenyon noted how the fires are moving amazingly fast. Chief Watkins said in the Pine Ridge Fire it is due to the topography and the wind. The Chief explained that the fire is along the interstate starting at the Powderhorn exit and north along the river. The firefighters did do a back burn to keep the fire from spreading to the Town of DeBeque. There is a concern if the fire were to jump the river as there are some high powered transmission lines that feed Grand Junction. The utility companies have indicated that they would de-energize those lines to prevent any damage and eliminate additional safety hazard. Without those feeds, Grand Junction would have widespread power outages.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned with a motion from Councilmember Kenyon, seconded by Councilmember Boeschstein.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Stephanie Tuin, MMC  
City Clerk