

**SPECIAL STUDY SESSION NOTES  
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO**

**February 25, 2013**

Mayor DiTullio called the Study Session to order at 8:20 p.m. Council members present: Davis Reinhart, Bud Starker, Joyce Jay, Kristi Davis, Mike Stites, Joseph DeMott, and George Pond.

Absent: Tracy Langworthy

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; Treasurer, Larry Schulz; City Attorney, Jerry Dahl; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; Public Works Director Tim Paranto; and interested citizens.

Public Comment –

**John Marriott** His business is on Kipling and he bikes to work when weather allows. The biggest impediments to bicycle travel in Wheat Ridge are mostly north/south hindrances – primarily I-70. Crossing Clear Creek is also troublesome. Traveling up and down Kipling is important. A path 10 feet wide may not be necessary; 5 feet wide may be enough. He also encouraged undergrounding the utilities *now* in the non-commercial areas such as a park, or across the street from the Rec Center, or the residential areas. Undergrounding in commercial areas can be the responsibility of the developers, but for areas that are not likely to be redeveloped this is a good time to get the undergrounding done – before the concrete goes down. Otherwise it's unlikely it will ever happen.

**Gene Shirley** said 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a waste of time and money. He thinks the back-in diagonal parking is a safety hazard and moving planters around isn't going to accomplish anything. At a town meeting prior to the project people expressed not wanting to have it, and they were told the City didn't know how many businesses wanted this. Don't force this down the peoples' throat. Stop spending money on it.

1. Staff Reports - none
2. 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue Improvements

Staff wants some direction on what to do this year in the 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor. Staff will have a one-year report evaluating the metrics. Overall sales tax in the corridor is up. Staff appreciates Council's concern over the temporary look of the improvements. The low-cost options staff presented in January received luke-warm support. A different set of option are:

- 1) Do nothing -- Staff does not recommend this.
- 2) Wait for the trial period to end in Dec 2013, evaluate all metrics, decide on next steps

- 3) Construct **temporary** improvements (landscape islands) - \$150,000 – as discussed on January 28  
This amount includes the cost of relocating the existing planters to locations further east on the corridor, where they could be consolidated with other planters to form larger planter pods. The \$150,000 estimate does not include any infrastructure for permanent irrigation. Beyond the \$150,000 for construction, an additional \$10,000 would be required each year to maintain the landscape islands, including hand watering (details available in Attachment 1).
- 4) Construct **permanent** improvements in the Main Street district only – ranging in cost from \$676,000 to \$2.3M
- 5) Implement permanent road design for Main Street as recommended in Corridor Plan – approx. \$5.m

Sarah Showalter went through some images from the packet related to Option 4, focusing only on permanent improvements from Upham to Teller.

- The pictures portray options that move toward a permanent design
- A long, 6" curbed, landscaped island of shrubbery and trees in front of the school where there is no curb cut
- Similar treatment on the south side of the street, allowing for curb cuts at Teller and High Court.
- Not a concrete curb, but something more substantial to give a quality look
- Opting for an 18 inch raised curb would be more expensive but have a more substantial look
- These landscape islands would be disconnected from the existing sidewalk to accommodate storm water flow, but this allows for (eventually) the wide continuous sidewalk people said they wanted
- Hopefully we'll be able to put flag banners on Xcel-owned poles
- Existing planters and pop-up cafes would be removed and relocated.
- Images with the 18 inch raised curb include gateway or monument signs and overhead banners across the street.
- For this project we would need to hire a landscape architect urban designer to come up with a plan for hardscape and plant materials to make sure we are heading down the right path for the marketing and branding plan. What we currently have is a hodge-podge of design elements along the corridor.

Rough budget estimates were included.

- An intermediate design for a 6" high, curbed treatment is \$676,000 for Upham to High Court.
- The raised islands would be \$1.036 M.

- From High Court to Pierce staff plans to talk with property owners to see if some driveways can be consolidated.
- Using this design from Upham all the way to Pierce would cost \$2.3M

Next Steps that will happen

- ✓ May 2013 - evaluation of metrics (traffic, speeds, accidents, sales tax).
- ✓ Spring/summer - consolidation of the planters, addition of overhead banners poles, adding smaller banners to the Xcel poles

If Council chooses to go ahead with the intermediate steps of Option 4 staff can begin to design improvements this spring, get the public involved, and be able to begin construction early in 2014.

Considerable discussion followed.

Mr. Reinhart asked for a consensus to have staff produce a permanent design to include 6" curbed raised planters, entry poles and signage on both sides of the street from Upham to Teller. Five Councilmembers approved; Councilmembers Stites and DeMott declined.

It was clarified that an outside designer will be engaged for this process, and it would be built in 2014.

Mr. Goff reported that the project for the banner poles is moving along and negotiations are still ongoing with Xcel to allow us to put banners on their light poles.

Mr. Goff also announced this would be Sarah Showalter's last meeting. She has taken a position with the City of Denver. He thanked her for all she has done for the City. Council wished her well.

### 3. Kipling Street Trail Utility Relocation discussion

The City received a quote from Xcel Energy to underground the overhead utility lines along the Kipling Corridor between 32<sup>nd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> Avenues. The lines between 35<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenues were undergrounded with the Discovery Park project. The total cost to underground the remainder of the lines is \$3.6 million.

As part of a franchise agreement between the City of Wheat Ridge and Xcel Energy, 1% of the company's revenues collected within Wheat Ridge is earmarked to the City annually for the undergrounding of overhead utility lines. This is known as the 1% Fund.

The City currently has a balance in the 1% Fund and can borrow ahead three years for a total balance of \$1.6 million. This will be enough to fund the \$1.2 million cost for undergrounding from 32<sup>nd</sup> to 35<sup>th</sup>.

The City does not have a formal policy on the use of 1% Funds. Several past projects have included 1) Discovery Park; 2) 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue west of Wadsworth to Lutheran Hospital; 3) 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Pierce Street; and 4) 32<sup>nd</sup> and Youngfield Street interchange.

Although every potential undergrounding project has its merits, the City has limited funds to underground overhead utilities. Staff recommends that these funds be reserved for more commercially intensive areas of the City where the 1% Funds can contribute to larger revitalization projects and potentially an economic return to the City. For example, staff has been working with the owners of the Applewood Shopping Center on a major revitalization of the Center. Overhead utility lines still exist around the perimeter of the Center. The City could contribute to this project through the use of its 1% Fund.

Based upon the estimates (\$3,623,000.00) provided by Xcel Energy, Public Works recommends against requesting that Xcel Energy underground existing power lines in association with the Kipling Trail Project.

Following discussion Mr. Stites received a consensus (vote 4-3) to move forward with the undergrounding of the overhead utility lines from 32<sup>nd</sup> to 35<sup>th</sup>.

#### 4. Elected Officials' Reports

**Joyce Jay** reported from DRCOG. A planning meeting was held Feb. 22-23 in Colorado Springs. Board members re-emphasized DRCOG goals which include changing demographics (particularly the booming senior population) and how that affects economic development, housing, transportation and health care. The Board also discussed ever-tightening funding sources due to shrinking federal transportation dollars, as well as changing the DRCOG scoring system to allocate those dollars. ~ There was also solid discussion on the need for encouraging bike routes in our cities -- with biking being an affordable choice to road capacity problems.

**Davis Reinhart** reported from the Jefferson Economic Council. He asked for authorization to send a letter of support for their efforts to raise funds. Council was agreeable to that.

Meeting adjourned at 9: 44 PM.

  
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Janelle Shaver, City Clerk