

**STUDY SESSION NOTES**  
**CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO**  
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue

**June 3, 2013**

Mayor DiTullio called the Study Session to order at 6:30 p.m. Council members present: Davis Reinhart, Bud Starker, Joyce Jay, George Pond, Mike Stites, Tracy Langworthy, Joseph DeMott, Kristi Davis

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; Treasurer, Larry Schulz; Public Works Director, Tim Paranto; guests and interested citizens

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS**

**Tom Slattery** encouraged Council to stand by its earlier decision not to put a height and density increase on the ballot. He pointed out that WR2020 is sponsoring this issue and since they are funded in part with City tax dollars, he thinks it's very inappropriate for WR2020 to take a side on the issue. It may be legal, but it's not ethical. Council is charged with treating all citizens and agencies that have an interest in this issue equally. Indirect funding by the City for one side of a ballot issue does not provide for equity.

**Nancy Snow** spoke in opposition to an increase in height and density limits. She thinks it would ruin the City. To say businesses won't come to WR because of these limits makes no sense. Commercial is always on the first floor. More apartments will surely make money for the developers, but not for the City. She hopes not to see it on the November ballot.

1. Staff Report(s) none

2. I-70 & Kipling Street Interchange PEL Study

Tim Paranto introduced Danny Herrmann from CDOT who went through the mechanics of how the study was done. The study was done to narrow the alternatives that would reduce congestion, optimize operations, improve safety, accommodate multi-modal connections, and take care of current and future needs.

10 meetings have been held involving staff from CDOT, the cities of Arvada and Wheat Ridge, Jefferson County, DRCOG, RTD, and FHWA. Elected officials are being briefed. Small group stakeholder meetings were held with emergency service providers, LiveWell Wheat Ridge, and the WR city staff.

For public outreach, public open houses were held in April and December 2012. Attendance was 50+ and 75+ respectively. 6 community focus group meetings were also held in August and November 2012 with homeowners, and business and multimodal representatives.

33 alternatives were narrowed down to these two recommendations.

#### Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI)

- Typical urban interchange; no changes to current frontage road access
- Must be built all at one time (construction costs higher, ROW costs lower)
- Minor community and ROW (Right Of Way) impacts
- One full ROW acquisition (Conoco) due to Kipling widening; some partial acquisitions
- Full movements at 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue interchange remain
- Conceptual level cost: \$45-52 M

#### Traditional Diamond Interchange

- Most common urban interchange; includes relocation of South Frontage Road
- Can be constructed in phases (lower construction costs)
- ROW costs higher: Four full ROW acquisitions (law office, Ramada Inn, Interstate Best Value Inn and Larson's Ski and Sport) due to Kipling widening and South Frontage Road relocation
- Some partial acquisitions and impacts to business access
- 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue converted to right-in/right-out; limited pedestrian mobility there
- Conceptual level cost: \$45-52 M

Both alternatives provide direct multimodal connections through the interchange. The bike/ped people and RTD prefer the SPUI and Diamond plans.

Additional considerations for freeway and ramp improvements are:

#### Eastbound On Ramp Continuous Lane

- Shifts the I-70 median; makes room for more cars; narrower inside shoulders
- Not an interim improvement – would remain until I-70 is reconstructed, which isn't planned
- Compatible with both SPUI and Diamond
- Provides immediate operational benefit at a fairly low cost

#### Westbound Off Ramp

- Would address the largest public and safety concerns of the interchange: queuing from westbound traffic to the I-70 mainline
- Two options being considered: 1) double right with one free flow lane (works best in modeling), or 2) signalized double right. Both are interim improvements – throwaway for both SPUI and Diamond
- Relatively low cost (\$500,000); quick construction; justified for good benefit
- Biggest consideration is when the interchange will be done

#### Next steps for the PEL Study

1. Final stakeholder coordination; WR will be asked for documentation of support
2. Final PEL report and recommendations ready for public distribution June 2013

We're still at the beginning. The next steps in the process will be to identify individual construction elements, go through the environmental process and

establish design and construction. Key is cost. The first project they'll consider will likely be the eastbound continuous on ramp (\$700,000). Then they will proceed to obtain the environmental documentation and decide on the final choice for the interchange. After that decision they'll look at implementing interim improvements.

Council had no questions. There was no discussion.

### 3. Discussion of Height and Density Ballot Issue

Mrs. Jay stated she and Mr. Starker put this on the agenda because they felt the topic didn't get enough discussion at the retreat.

City Attorney Dahl reported he is doing some research on old building permits that were issued prior to incorporation to uncover how the City Charter may or may not apply for exemptions to the 21 units per acre.

Council members' opinions:

Mrs. Jay believes the retreat decision was made hurriedly without benefit of public reaction or the WR2020 data. ~ She also thinks it's OK for the City to spend money to support the sales tax issue because she remembers seeing councilmembers' names on literature in support of previous issues.

Ms. Davis thinks the retreat discussion was to have only one issue on the ballot that they really want to make sure passes. She fears adding another issue might cause defeat for both, and prefers focusing on the one issue.

Mayor DiTullio noted that the first time the removal of height and density limits was put on the ballot, it failed. The compromise that passed only lifted those limits in the urban renewal areas.

Mr. DeMott's memory of the discussion at the retreat was that they would NOT discuss it further since they had agreed to propose the sales tax increase. The discussion wasn't cut off, it was just agreed to not have it. ~ He also now has concerns about the issue of WR2020's support.

Mr. DeMott and Mrs. Langworthy both noted that City money CANNOT be spent in support of a ballot issue. Individual councilmembers, however, are free to do that.

Mr. Starker agreed that at the retreat they decided not to pursue height and density because of the sales tax issue, but he agrees with Mrs. Jay that there was not a reasoned discussion of the issue.

Mr. Dahl provided some general information about deadlines for setting a ballot title. ~ Per the Fair Campaign Practices Act, City monies may not be used to sway voters after the ballot question is finalized (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading). The City may only answer individual, factual questions and the Council as a body may choose to pass a resolution about the ballot question. As individuals, councilmembers are free to take sides. ~ For WR2020, the fact that the City funds WR2020 for some projects does

not mean that WR2020, as an organization, cannot take a position on a particular issue.

Mr. DeMott suggested that this be finalized before the Town Hall Meeting.

Mr. Stites understands times change, but the height and density exemptions that *did* pass were done with a voter understanding that it would be limited to urban renewal areas and the I-70 corridor – where it wouldn't threaten neighborhoods. He thinks it's too late to try to put height and density on the ballot and have it pass. ~ He also thinks WR2020 was set up to *not* be a political organization.

Mr. Reinhart asked for consensus to drop the issue of a ballot question this year that would propose an increase in height and density. This passed 6-2, with Councilmembers Jay and Starker opposed.

4. Family Tree Table Ship Sponsorship ~ Tracy Langworthy

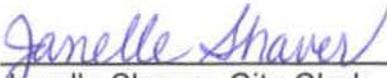
No discussion. It was agreed to spend \$600 for a table at the June 20 fundraiser for Family Tree. (Family Tree's County funding has been cut.)

5. Elected Officials' Report(s)

Mrs. Jay noted the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> annual WR Garden Tour on Saturday, June 15, 9:00 – 1:00. It starts at WR Middle School. Tickets are \$15 and Pietra's is donating lunch. The nine gardens on the tour include a wide variety of garden types.

Mr. Starker announced the District 1 listening session at Ye Olde Firehouse (32<sup>nd</sup> and Depew) this Friday, June 7 at 5 PM. It will last about one hour.

The Study Session adjourned at 7:25 pm.

  
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Janelle Shaver, City Clerk