

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue
May 6, 2019

Mayor Bud Starker called the Study Session to order at 7:00 p.m.

Council members present: George Pond, Janeece Hoppe, David Kueter, Zachary Urban, Larry Mathews, and Leah Dozeman

Absent: Kristi Davis (excused)

Also present: City Clerk, Janelle Shaver; City Manager, Patrick Goff; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; other staff, guests and interested citizens.

Citizen Comment

John Berry (no address given) doesn't live here but owns a business in District 4. His concern is the Building Code update which currently doesn't allow certain types of extraction in WR. Some businesses are grandfathered in and he would like to be able to do that as well. Section 502.20, Extraction of hazardous oil from hash, classifies water based extraction as hazardous, and all other types of extraction are not permitted. He's been doing business since 2015. Since then the industry has changed mostly to combustible extraction. It's cheaper and studies show it is safe. Many states and cities now allow combustible extraction. Many companies reformed their safety measures; he's spoken to them and is willing to invest in the changes that are necessary. This would allow more employees. He currently has 13 employees but could double that; his turnover is very low. It would also allow him to do improvements to the building which is next to Ward Station. The City wants to make his area look better. He has talked to Mr. Johnstone. He asked councilmembers to read the handout he's provided and consider adopting the changes.

Odarka Figlus (WR) is glad Council is talking about affordable housing. She thinks the City needs to work with metro partners. She would like to know the numbers/balance of types of housing – from expensive houses down to rentals. She believes Council should compare to our neighbors – if our percentages are similar or not. She suggested this needs lots of analysis and finds it interesting that a developer is giving the presentation tonight. She thinks it would be good to have someone else come in. She also cautioned Council not to assume people do not want small houses on large lots. There are buyers that want that. Perhaps Wheat Ridge could be on the leading edge of that. She'd like to see the City preserve what we have rather than maximizing units.

Rachel Hultin (WR) is excited to see the Council address affordable housing. She dealt with this in a previous career. She feels this is a good time to look at retaining people who are here now. There are a number of programs to assist seniors to stay in their homes. She believes we need to work to keep our people here.

Ihor Figlus (WR) reminded Council that we don't have water as a resource. The aquifers are being depleted and we have periodic droughts. He asked council to please consider that when they make decisions on housing and density. With limited resources we don't want to get in trouble with that down the road.

1. Staff Report(s):

a) 2018 Building Code Update ~ Randy Slusser, Chief Building Inspector

Ken Johnstone would like to get Council's approval for the process moving forward. Mr. Slusser is the contract inspector we have through Charles Abbott and Assoc. He said the next steps would be preliminary approval – then advertisement with contractors and developers and meeting with them for input. They anticipate a more comprehensive study session with Council in the future.

Discussion followed.

- Should have the code adopted in 2019. Don't anticipate a lot of change; a few minor updates.
- When a new one comes out, is there a list of the changes? Yes, they do itemize major changes.
- How is grandfathering handled? Existing conditions are grandfathered. Carbon dioxide detectors are required retroactively by the State.
- Are inspectors allow to go thru the house and find other things wrong? No, they need to have permission.

2. 2018 Xcel Clean Energy Vision – Preston Gibson, Xcel Energy

Our area representative Preston Gibson gave a power point to update Council on Xcel's efforts to rely more and more on renewable energy and be less carbon based.

- He congratulated Wheat Ridge for being one of the first to participate in the solar garden. He said Wheat Ridge is really going above and beyond.
- Xcel is headed to carbon free by 2050.
- Xcel serves regions in 8 states. Their goals are to lead the clean energy transition, enhance the customer experience, and keep bills low.
- Xcel's carbon vision is to 1) reduce carbon, 2) protect cost and reliability, and 3) advance technology.
- In 2018 we had a 38% reduction on carbon; by 2030 we expect 80% reduction and by 2050 be carbon free.
- They are increasing renewables on the grid and heading rapidly to that goal.
- Xcel is adding massive amounts of battery storage.
- He gave some details about how the carbon transition will be achieved.
- In some areas coal is gone; in some areas coal is now half.
- Their goals align with Paris climate agreement target to limit warming by 2 degrees. Xcel is on the leading edge investing in wind and solar.
- Challenges for 100% renewables: include 1) costs, 2) overbuilding the grid capacity as much as 8x peak is required, and 3) no great solution now to use and store surplus renewable energy. .

- 2050 Aspiration depends on 24/7 carbon-free technology: Examples include:
 - Natural gas with carbon capture and storage
 - Deep rock geothermal
 - Power to gas
 - Advanced nuclear
 - Seasonal storage
 - Other
- He went through the customer based choices that will help the process.
- Advanced grid intelligence and security are key components.
- Currently have 150 programs that have allowed them to avoid building 20 power plants.
- They are working on strategic electrification (electric cars).
- In CO our energy bills are 30% lower than the national average.

Discussion followed:

Councilmember Mathews read from a number of articles that challenge Xcel's numbers as related to profit, cost effectiveness and promises of economic development. Their number are self-serving, unreliable and not accurate.

- Closing Comanche Units 1&2 that run fine and produce 700 megawatts of power, and replacing them with several facilities that generate 2400 megawatts.
- This would cost \$2.5B and generate \$250M in profit for whoever builds them.
- Xcel also builds new power facilities and will build 50-75% of the new facilities. This guarantees \$125M in extra profits for Xcel.
- 10 years ago Xcel invested \$90M in new clean emissions equipment to make the Comanche units among the most environmentally friendly in the world. Now will tear them down 10 yrs early in favor of renewables. Data on savings will come in 2046.
- New power plants only last 20 years instead of 50 (for the current ones), and then must be replaced.
- There is an opinion out there that Xcel is being enriched by PUC at expense of ratepayers.
- Since sun doesn't always shine and wind doesn't always blow, PUC approved Xcel to build 3½ times more power plant space to guarantee the same amount of consistent power, i.e. closing 660 megawatts of low cost reliable power and replacing it with 202,400 megawatts of inconsistent wind and solar.

Mayor Starker advised that questions were necessary to allow for back-and-forth dialog. Councilmember Mathews wanted to present his side so there could be debate. Mayor Starker suggested Councilmember Mathews put together a presentation that could be scheduled for another study session.

Councilmember Dozeman said the goals are good, but what is the cost? Mr. Gibson said their commitment is to create this energy at a cost that doesn't raise rates. If rates go up, they will not raise them more than the consumer price index.

- Yes, Xcel is closing two turbines at Comanche early, but they were going to close anyway. Xcel has worked closely with Pueblo elected officials and committed to creating jobs for those workers that will lose their jobs.

- He understands not everyone agrees with Xcel, but most of their customers want them to move in this direction.
- Xcel is a regulated monopoly. Any profit they make, if there is any, is controlled by the PUC.

Mr. Gibson and Councilmember Mathews exchanged opinions on plant closure.

- Xcel does get paid to decommission plants.
- The bids for renewables were so low last year that Xcel has been able to retire coal fired plants early. The cost of coal is down a third; wind is down 25%.
- Average bill in Colorado has gone down.

Councilmember Hoppe is happy with the solar panel she just added to her home. She does recommend better customer service getting the system online once the panels are installed. That took a long time.

Councilmember Mathews asked if wind and solar are subsidized by the federal government. Mr. Gibson acknowledged there are federal tax incentives.

Councilmember Urban received the following answers.

- The technology necessary to store electricity long enough for it to be economical does not yet exist.
- Mr. Gibson wasn't sure if the Clean Air Act helps or hinders carbon sequestration.
- Use of electricity per person is going down. Is offset by expanded customer base.
- Technology isn't there yet to provide power when there are extended periods of no wind and no sun.

Councilmember Mathews received the following answers.

- When the wind stops Xcel can power up to natural gas fairly quickly; coal takes a little longer. Seven day wind forecasts are helpful to provide seamless transition.
- The base is natural gas. They are pulling back on coal.

Councilmember Dozeman pursued the topic of cost for infrastructure to get on a renewable energy grid vs the environmental benefit.

- Numbers for cost of infrastructure were not available.
- As far as how much this would impact the global temperature, Mr. Gibson said what they are accomplishing is meeting the target of no more than 2 degrees centigrade increase from pre-industrial levels.

No consensus was necessary.

3. Affordable Housing – **Shannon Cox Baker**, Urban Ventures, LLC (VP of Development)

Ms. Baxter gave a power point presentation that addressed the following:

- Who needs affordable housing?
- Why do we need affordable housing? Vacancy rates down, prices going up
- Highest categories of poverty categories = women, and persons age 18-34.

- Rental price choices are diversified in WR (Denver skews to high end rent)
- 33% of WR's population is 65+ years old. WR does have a good amount of senior low income restricted housing.
- WR incomes are on the rise.
- Government role in affordable housing
 - Local governments have lots of opportunities to leverage. Zoning laws run counter to affordable housing. Councils can work on that.
 - Lots of state and federal funding is available.
 - Barriers include land costs, construction costs, entitlement risk, competitive and limited sources of equity financing and NIMBYism.
- A large list of partners for affordable housing. (Housing Authorities are helpful.)
- She showed some examples of her company's projects in Denver that have income restricted.
- It takes a lot of subsidy to build single family affordable housing.
- She presented a list of things Council could do to support affordable housing
 - Preserve what affordability exists (land trusts model, covenants)
 - Establish partnerships
 - Create a strategic plan
 - Reduce land basis: sell, lease land and buildings at low/no cost
 - Create incentives: expedited approvals, density bonuses, fee waivers
 - Provide political support
 - Increase funding accessibility.
 - Advocate for affordable housing

Councilmembers Mathews and Urban had a few questions. No consensus was taken.

Mayor Starker declared a break at 8:28pm. The study session resumed at 8:40

4. Amended and Restated Service Plan for Ward TOD Metropolitan District ~
Megan Murphy, from the law firm of

Following an introduction by Mr. Goff, Ms. Murphy discussed the proposed service plan.

- The current plan is based on the previous development plan.
- The development that is going to be built is much smaller.
- The Tole Brothers is working with RTD to remove their parking from the plan.
- The current service plan is for 50 mills. They are proposing 60 mills, but it is doubtful that will ever be needed.
- The Service Plan is needed for the development to proceed.
- Benefits of approving the amended plan are:
 - The City will not be obligated for debt issued by the District to fund public improvements.
 - The District will be providing public improvements where no other public entity is willing or able to do so.
 - The land has remained undeveloped for some time. The Amended Service Plan along with the other land development approvals for The Ridge at Ward Station are necessary to begin development.

Questions and discussion followed.

There was unanimous consent to move this forward for next week's Council meeting.

5. Elected Officials' Report(s)

Clerk Shaver announced that some 15 individual reports on various aspects of the Wadsworth widening are set up at a table in the Clerk's office. There are also two large notebooks with the EAS (Environmental Assessment) report and the Historic Properties report. Diagrams and other information is available. The public is invited to come and look at the information and they are very welcome to leave comments.

Mr. Goff added that there will be a public meeting on the Wadsworth EAS on May 22 from 5-8 pm at City Hall. There will be presentations at 5:30 and 7:00.

Leah Dozeman announced there will be a public meeting tomorrow night about Wadsworth at the Grange hosted by the WR Chamber of Commerce. It will include a panel discussion and goes from 7:00 – 9pm. Everyone is welcome.

Amanda Weaver thanked the City for the exciting festivities opening the G Line.

Mayor Starker reported the G Line is open and running. There was a great opening. He believes this will be a great addition to the city. ~ He also thanked the WRHS Stem Team for the Gala they had this past Saturday. He attended, as did some of the councilmembers. He said the STEM program at WR High School is second to none.

Larry Mathews asked about some resumed whistle testing for the G Line. Mr. Goff said according to the information he has from RTD it should have been completed by May 4. He suggested that if there is any additional testing on Thursday and Friday nights from midnight to 4am it should be temporary.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:59 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON June 10, 2019



Janelle Shaver, City Clerk



Janece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem