

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue
April 20, 2020

Mayor Bud Starker called the Study Session to order at 6:30 p.m.

This meeting was conducted as a VIRTUAL MEETING.

No members of the Council or City staff were physically present at the Municipal building for this meeting; the public did not attend in person.

Mayor Starker welcomed the Council, other elected officials, staff and interested citizens.

The Mayor also explained the virtual meeting format, how citizens will have the opportunity to be heard, and the procedures and policies to be followed.

Council members present: Amanda Weaver, Judy Hutchinson, Zach Urban, Janeece Hoppe, Rachel Hultin, Korey Stites, Valerie Nosler Beck, and Leah Dozeman.

Also present: City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; City Manager Patrick Goff; Community Development Director, Ken Johnstone; Director of Administration Allison Scheck; Assistant to the City Manager, Marianne Schilling, Sustainability Coordinator for the City, Kayla Betzold, Economic Development Manager, Steve Art, guests including Mr. Preston Gibson, Area Manager for Community and Local Government Affairs with Xcel Energy, Joy Opp and Amy DePierre with Sustainable Wheat Ridge, other staff and interested citizens.

Citizen Comment on Agenda Items

Caitlin Wedgewood, not a Wheat Ridge resident, sought more information about the Business Stabilization Program. How were the grants decided? Is there a way to get around the requirement that a business be currently licensed? A business she represents paid their license fee late, but he did pay it. The business has been operating in Wheat Ridge for decades and has always had a business license; they simply overlooked the renewal of their license early this year. When they realized the mistake, they renewed their license and paid the fees. Will the Task Force make an exception for extenuating circumstances?

Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:

Citizens may visit the Wheat Ridge Speaks website and enter written comments of up to 1,000 words on any Council agenda item. The deadline for citizens to submit comments is 12:00 Noon Mountain Time on the day of a Council session so that Council members, other elected officials and City Staff have time to review the comments before the meeting on Monday evening.

The City Clerk's Office transcribes those Wheat Ridge Speaks comments into these minutes, placing each comment along with the record for that agenda item, including items that include a public hearing (verbatim, if the comments do not contain lascivious language or unlawful hate speech).

1. Xcel Energy – Building a Clean Energy Future

Mr. Goff introduced Mr. Preston Gibson who gave a brief presentation on the subject, which included how, on December 4, 2018, Xcel Energy rolled out a Clean Energy Vision that will deliver 100 percent carbon-free electricity to customers by 2050. As part of this vision, the company also announced plans to reduce carbon emissions 80 percent by 2030, from 2005 levels in the eight states that they serve. These new goals are the most ambitious announced to date within the electric power industry.

Council one comment:

Council thanked Mr. Gibson for his time and his interesting presentation.

2. Sustainable Wheat Ridge Update

Ms. Schilling, Betzold, Opp and DePierre presented information about the Wheat Ridge Sustainability including:

- Energy Efficiency & Green Building
- Transportation
- Solid Waste & Recycling
- Renewable Energy
- Water
- Communication & Engagement
- Accomplishments from Sustainability Wheat Ridge to date

Council questions and comments:

Several councilmembers congratulated Sustainable Wheat Ridge on an excellent presentation and a wonderful program for the City and out residents. Councilmembers cited the breadth, depth and expertise among the staff and volunteers and among the projects the program supports.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hoppe asked about recycling of building materials.

Has the City been awarded the grant from the Colorado DPHE to fully fund the sustainability effort? The answer was that we will hear in mid-May.

3. **Staff Report(s)**

Mr. Goff had several items:

- A. There are issues with housing that Jeffco Human Services and the state have been focusing upon, especially among our homeless population, who have a high rate of coronavirus infections. Several motels in Wheat Ridge are participating in a program to help this population and thereby support public health generally. Holiday Inns have been a leader in this effort in many cities and have a system with protocols to house and care for these people. In answer to questions, Mr. Goff reported that the rooms will go to those recovering from infection, and no other guests will be at risk, since the motels and hotels are currently not operating for the usual traveling customer base.
- B. The Westbound I-70 off-ramp will open this Friday, April 24th. This will involve a traffic flow change, and a public education and local signage programs are helping to prepare for the transition.
- C. Congress is working on another stimulus package that will include more funding for small businesses.
- D. Congress is also working on an additional stimulus package with funding for counties and municipalities not eligible for the previous appropriations.
- E. The Governor has issued an order strongly recommending that people wear masks in public.

Councilmember Hultin asked whether Jefferson County is considering a mandate or recommendation to wear masks in public. Mr. Goff replied that he knows of no effort at the County.

Councilmember Weaver expressed support for requiring Wheat Ridge residents to wear masks whenever in public or visiting essential businesses. Councilmember Hutchinson supported that idea and appealed to citizens to wear a mask for the protection of everyone.

Councilmember Urban asked who would enforce such an order and what sanctions would be involved. Mr. Goff replied that there are vendors who that service, and local business owners can enforce it. Councilmember Stites encouraged the City to issue such an order to support businesses that want to enforce it. Whether there are teeth in the order or not, it supports those who want compliance in their business locations.

Councilmember Nosler Beck expressed the hope that there is an education component to this to avoid denying elderly or disabled residents' access to businesses for essential goods and services. Councilmember Hutchinson believes that residents are already aware of the need to wear masks.

Councilmember Hoppe supports an order mandating masks, but wants a grace period for educating the public, educating business owners and their staffs and posting signs with the help of civic organizations like the Rotary and Optimists.

Councilmember Urban urged the City Manager to exercise his authority under the emergency declaration to require face coverings of all residents in public, especially in businesses. Councilmember Stites supported that comment and expressed the belief it must be a requirement because it protects others in the public not just the individual. Councilmembers urged that any order have a specific expiration date, possibly connected to the Governor's stay at home order.

Councilmember Hoppe proposed a consensus to issue a mandatory face covering while in public or visiting an essential business, accompanied by an educational effort for the public and business owners, with a specific start date and deadline to end the mandate on May 31, unless rescinded earlier or extended by further orders.

- F. Mr. Goff asked for guidance about extending the ban on STR past April 30th. Following a detailed discussion Council advised Mr. Goff that the current ban on STR should expire on April 30th.
- G. Mr. Goff reviewed the Governor's announcement that Colorado will begin limited relaxation of the stay-at-home order beginning April 27th. Final written order from the Governor is pending. He emphasized that the Governor does not plan to re-open restaurants, theaters, recreation center or gyms next week.
- H. Mr. Goff asked for consensus to continue holding Council and other City meetings through the end of May. Council agreed to continue virtual meetings through May 2020.

4. Elected Officials' Report(s)

a) Business Stabilization Program Update (Urban/Hoppe)

Mr. Steve Art gave a detailed report on the activities of the Small Business Sustainability Program since it began. He reviewed business eligibility requirements. The Task Force has met virtually to discuss applications and the selection process and will meet tomorrow for final decisions. To date there are 131 applications who requested a total of \$630,000; the pool of funds Council approved totaled \$250,000.

The following comments appeared in Wheat Ridge Speaks for this Agenda item.

Hello!

My name is Anna and I own a small business in Wheat Ridge. I was so excited to hear about the grant being offered to sustain small business owners through these hard times. However, I came to find out that I would need a Wheat Ridge business license in order to apply. I strongly believe in compliance with all state and county requirements, and had I known I would have been sure to apply for a license when I opened my practice. As such, I never received a notice or any form of communication about this requirement (and all of my colleagues in Wheat Ridge also had never heard of this requirement) and so do not hold a current license. As I know the application period has ended and I do not hold a current license for Wheat Ridge I ask that city council start a second round of grant

funding without the requirement to have a current license, but rather that they have an application in process. I also ask for more funding for the second round of grants as I know there was a large pool of applicants for the first round and expect there to be many more with the second round.

As a single mom with two young children, this business is my sole income. As I strongly believe in social isolation and as DORA has required me to not practice in person, I have no means of making an income.

Grants like this will allow me to pay my rent, pay for food for my family, and ensure I will be able to resume my practice after this isolation ends. And even when the isolation is lifted, I will be able to work minimally as I now have two young children at home (one of whom is immunocompromised) for which I have to provide daily care. I will not be able to take them to work with me because of the risk of contamination, and so I will be out of work much longer than other colleagues as I do not have another adult in the house with which to leave them.

Thank you for your consideration and thank you for taking care of small business owners!

Prickly mermaid acupuncture and herbs

04/20/2020 10:46 am

Anna Francis

7170 W 42nd Ave

Wheat Ridge, 80033-4861

My name is Celeste and I own Wholeheartedly Well-being, a small massage therapy biz in Wheat Ridge. Due to the nature of my work (in person and in close proximity with my clients in a small space) I had to close my doors on March 16th. My business is very young, 1 year old, so I have been working very hard at growing my client base and making a name of myself in the community. COVID19 pandemic has seriously stopped my momentum, and I am wondering now if I'll be able to come back to my practice, I also know that my peers with whom I share office space are in a very similar situation, we are all in Wheat Ridge.

I was not aware that the city of Wheat Ridge offered grants through this situation, I only found out because of a colleague who also owns a business in Wheat Ridge and gave me info about these grants, but by then it was too late and the grants were gone.

I am asking you to consider setting up another set of grants for the small businesses of Wheat Ridge and also to think about strategies and ways to make it easier for us small businesses to stay afloat.

Thank you for your time and efforts to help.

04/20/2020 11:37 am

Celeste Ferro
5455 W 38th Ave Ste C
Wheat Ridge, 80212

End of Wheat Ridge Speaks comments on this item.

Council questions and comments:

Councilmember Hultin asked for clarification of what a second round of funding would entail. Councilmember Urban asked that Council consider an additional \$425,000 to fund additional grants.

Councilmember Hoppe asked whether staff can identify the additional funding amidst budget cutting given revenue shortfalls and expense budget reductions. She also asked the Task Force to consider businesses Wheat Ridge businesses whose licenses were not in good order as of February 1, 2020. Councilmember Urban replied that a delinquently renewed business licenses are different from businesses who have never had a Wheat Ridge business license. Mr. Art commented that an extensive series of public information efforts followed the announcement of the current program.

A lengthy discussion about whether businesses operating in Wheat Ridge without a Wheat Ridge business license should be eligible for grants under this program.

Council discussed, with staff input, the wisdom of funding additional grants for this program before we know where the revenue stream stands, and before we know what the Federal government will do in the next round or rounds of funding.

Council reached a consensus to look at this program again on May 11th and continue with processing applications received for the current process.

Elected Officials Reports

Hoppe reported on the small business gift card program, and its website WRGiftCards.com.

Several Councilmembers thanked the public for our efforts to protect one another during this difficult time.

Councilmember Hutchinson asked about the legality and enforcement of residential fire pits. Mr. Goff said neither the fire district nor the city regulates such fire pits.

Councilmember Urban commented on CoVid-19 testing available here in Wheat Ridge and preparation for mass testing.

Mayor Starker thanked all of those who made presentations earlier this evening, and the public for helping one another during this emergency. He is amazed at how well we have adapted.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 9:08 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON June 8, 2020.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Janeece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem