

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Virtual Meeting
March 1, 2021

Mayor Bud Starker called the Study Session to order at 6:32 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: Zach Urban, Amanda Weaver, Judy Hutchinson, Corey Stites, Rachel Hultin, Leah Dozeman, Valerie Nosler Beck, Janeece Hoppe.

Also present: City Attorney Jerry Dahl; City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; Treasurer, Chris Miller; Chief of Police, Chris Murtha; Division Chief, Jim Lorentz; Director of Administration, Allison Scheck; Assistant to the City Manager, Marianne Schilling; other guests and interested citizens.

Citizen's Right to Speak

No one came forward to speak on Zoom or via telephone.

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).

No comments appeared in Wheat Ridge Speaks for this Council session.

1. Draft 2021 Resident survey

Discussion began at 6:34 pm, approximately :0 minutes into the recording of the session.

Issue

The survey is the seventh iteration of the City's biannual survey. The most recent resident survey was conducted in 2018. Similar to the previous survey, the city is conducting the survey earlier than in years past to have results by early June. The 2020 survey was postponed due to COVID, and the 2021 survey reflects updates that have taken place since the 2020 survey was finalized.

Staff reports

Ms. Schilling described the survey as the City's consumer report card and that the purpose of the survey is as follows:

- To assess resident satisfaction with community characteristics and amenities
- To evaluate Wheat Ridge local government and employees
- To further understand the resident's priorities regarding government services in Wheat Ridge

She also reported that Boulder-based National Research Center (NRC) (now the research arm of Polco, an online civic engagement platform) administers the survey. A postcard and pre-survey notification letter will be sent in March to 4,500 randomly selected households throughout the City.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including:

- The access to the questionnaire
- The introduction to the questions
- Items deleted from the draft approved last year and new ones inserted.
- The ordering of the items in the survey questionnaire.

Councilmember Hoppe proposed a consensus to move the survey forward. Consensus achieved.

2. Lodging Facility Licensing Program

Discussion began at 6:43 pm, approximately :0 minutes into the session.

Issue

Communities across the country, particularly those that contain a major interstate highway, find that their police departments and city services employ a disproportionate amount of resources dealing with budget motels within their jurisdiction. The City of Wheat Ridge certainly faces this issue. Wheat Ridge has nine motels in its jurisdiction with a total of 972 rooms. Resident calls for service (CFS) at these nine motels account for 7.5% of the total CFS in the entire city of 14,616 households and 4,194 businesses

Staff reports

Chief Chris Murtha gave an overview of the issues related to the crime and disturbances near I-70 and Kipling St.

Division Chief Jim Lorentz presented data on Police calls for service (CFS) at budget motels include unwanted parties, disturbances, welfare checks, theft, suspicious persons and vehicles, drug calls, domestic violence, assaults, motor vehicle thefts, and the list goes on.

With the rise of COVID-19 in 2020, the City of Wheat Ridge has had a marked increase in crime. With jail restrictions due to COVID and other proposed jail population management tools, arrest warrants have not been executed, and people who commit crimes are issued summonses rather than taken to jail. With courts not in session, the system is extremely backlogged and since warrants are not enforced, people are unlikely to appear on summons.

In general, the principles for effective strategies in lowering CFS at budget motels, as studied by the Center for Problem Oriented Policing, involve:

- 1) **Extra police patrol and enforcement.** While increased patrol and enforcement have a role in crime prevention, trying to “arrest” away the problem tends to be ineffective over time and is reactive in nature rather than proactive.
- 2) **Enlisting community support to address the problem,** i.e., changing the way motels do business requires support of elected officials, government agencies, and the community at large.
- 3) **Obtaining cooperation from motel owners and managers,** i.e., Crime Free Multi-Housing Program consisting of management training, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and Community Awareness Training.
- 4) **Establishing and enforcing minimum functionality and security standards,** i.e., City of Wheat Ridge Hotel/Motel Inspections Program.
- 5) **Adopting Extended Stay Lodging Regulations,** i.e., motels that allow extended stay options without regulation tend to have more CFS, crime and disorder. This strategy has been discussed by Community Development Director Ken Johnstone in his Staff Report dated June 11, 2019.
- 6) **Adopting Lodging Facility Licensing,** i.e., based on a CFS per room (CSF/room) ratio allowing for a standardized comparison of problem levels across motels of different sizes. This strategy is based on a model adopted by the City of Lakewood.

Chief Lorentz describes the City’s efforts in line with the first four approaches enumerated above. His suggestion is that we look at ordinances that deploy methods 5 and 6.

Staff believes that adopting a lodging facility licensing program would help in lowering police CFS at budget motels. Staff requests for council direction/approval to bring forward an ordinance for first reading.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

- Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including how to address these issues without hardening our relationship with businesses in that area.
- Do we have information/data about how nearby cities handle this problem?
- We need to implement a strategy that simultaneously helps our current business owners, does not punish motels unfairly and avoid discouraging good businesses to locate in Wheat Ridge while addressing this complex issue.
- How will the proposed actions here, especially the increase in lodging license fees, dovetail or conflict with our recent work on STR regulation? Mr. Dahl opined that the STR is a separate regulatory scheme and we need to specify that STR are not part of whatever strategies, ordinances or regulations put in place for hotels and motels.

Councilmember Hoppe proposed a consensus to bring forward proposed ordinance language to bring forward to a future Study Session.

Consensus achieved.

3. Liquor Occupation Tax Waiver

Discussion began at 7:31 pm, approximately 1: hours into the session.

Issue

To help local businesses weather the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, City Council requested that the City Clerk’s Office look into options for waiving and/or refunding revenues due the City related to liquor. These fees include liquor license renewal fees and liquor occupation tax (LOT). After researching state statutes regarding liquor license renewal fees, the recommended waiver program applies only to LOT.

Staff reports

City Clerk Steve Kirkpatrick updated councilmembers on the program, the waiver application process and documentation that would need to be provided to process and approve these waivers.

Discussion included:

- Ongoing Impact of Coronavirus on Restaurants and Bars
- Not to include Liquor license fees in the waiver program
- Liquor Occupation taxes (LOT)

Staff recommends that for the year of 2021, City Council reach consensus to waive the Liquor Occupation Taxes that have been collected by the license holders that have

qualified for the program. Those qualifying must hold the required LOT classes of F, G, or T. As this is a waiver of taxes and if consensus is reached, Council action will be necessary at the March 8, 2021 meeting

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including:

- Councilmembers
- Councilmembers agreed
- Councilmembers agreed

Councilmember Urban proposed a consensus to direct staff to bring forward a resolution to relieve on-premises consumption licensees who have experienced a 20% or more reduction in revenue year over year 2019/2020 (or if opening in 2020, 20% reductions from projected revenues in 2020)

Consensus achieved.

4. Staff Report(s)

This item began at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Ms. Scheck recalled that Jefferson County moved up to the Blue level on the Colorado CoVid Dial, the second most desirable rating. However, the Jefferson County Health Department, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the CDC all caution us that we cannot relent in our efforts to wear masks, watch social distance and wash our hands frequently. We are at constant risk of moving back down the Dial to level Yellow, something we all agree we need to avoid.

5. Elected Officials' Report

City Clerk Kirkpatrick reported that Jefferson County Health has announced that they will stand up a webpage on their website by the end of this week that will allow citizens to see where vaccine appointments are available anywhere across Colorado. People will no longer need to register on multiple sites to get on the wait list.

Clerk Kirkpatrick also noted that we will present a proclamation at next Monday's Council meeting supporting Women's History Month in March. The organizers of the Month chose purple as their color, and he suggested that we all wear something purple to the Council Meeting next Monday, March 8, in support of that cause.

Councilmember Hutchinson warned us that there are coyotes at large in the city.

The Mayor thanked all who participated and watched or called in to listen. Take care on one another.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON March 8, 2021



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Janeece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem