

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Virtual Meeting
March 15, 2021

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

Also present: City Manager, Patrick Goff; City Attorney Jerry Dahl; City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; City Treasurer, Chris Miller; Chief of Police, Chris Murtha; Division Chiefs, Darrel Guadnola and Jim Lorentz; Director of Administration, Allison Scheck; Municipal Court Judge, Chris Randall; Assistant to the City Manager, Marianne Schilling; Representative Monica Duran; CML Legislative Advocacy Manager Meghan Dollar; Amy Case and Lori Rosendahl, Foothills Regional Housing Authority; other guests and interested citizens.

Colorado State Senator Jessie Danielson was scheduled to appear and was not able to attend.

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. 2021 Colorado Legislative Update

Discussion began at 6:01 pm, approximately :01 minutes into the recording of the session.

Issue

The Legislative Update is an opportunity for the City's elected officials and staff to discuss legislative priorities, current legislation and Wheat Ridge positions/priorities for the 2021 session. Senator Jessie Danielson and Representative Monica Duran will be in attendance, and Colorado Municipal League Legislative Advocacy Manager, Meghan Dollar will be available to review legislation and answer questions.

Staff reports

Ms. Schilling described the agenda and the discussion of Priority Legislative Issues, including the CML Box Score of Bills, Bill list and 2021 with Legislative priorities by Megan Dollar. Rep. Duran discussed:

- Economic recovery from the pandemic, especially small businesses, childcare, rent and housing relief and mental health services
- The 2021-22 State budget
- Safe gun storage

She also reported on further details of the proposed legislation, especially with respect to the first bullet above.

Ms. Dollar listed and discussed a number of bills of interest to municipalities introduced in the first month of this legislative session. She discussed funding for transportation at length, and bills that have been introduced or will be introduced soon. She discussed a bill to alleviate jail overcrowding. There is a bill to sanction those to make threats against judges, which would make the sentences upon conviction more stringent as a consequence of such threats. Another bill addresses several issues related to plastic shopping bags, and cities' powers to regulate or outlaw plastic bags.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including:

- The Gap Fund resources
- Transportation funding in this year's budget
- A bill to improve mental health service provision

Chief Murtha addressed a proposed bill that would severely limit law enforcement's options for arresting and incarcerating offenders, including in some cases alleged felonies. Along with chiefs of police across the state, Chief Murtha adamantly opposes this bill, based on the results of emptying our jails during the pandemic. The current protocols, in response to CoVid spreading in jails, has resulted in dramatic increases in crime, especially by those released under the current system. In his opinion, this bill protects criminals, not victims. Across the state there are boundless examples of individuals cited or arrested for serious crimes but released for lack of jail space only to

see the same individuals re-offend, sometimes repeatedly, and at times within hours of their previous criminal activity.

Chief Guadnola provided further details and information to support law enforcement's opposition to this bill. He explained why the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police have stated a clear position in opposition. He gave several examples of individuals arrested for felonies, against whom warrants for their arrest for previous felonies were in force, but they were released because the jail refused to take the individual into custody. He listed a large number of offense categories that have dramatically increased during this pandemic period.

Chief Lorentz explained the impact this frustrating situation is having on the morale and motivation of police officers on our streets protecting us from criminals and serving us to ensure our safety. Right now, too many officers believe that their efforts are pointless. He described several cases in which an individual has five, six or more warrants outstanding for the same or similar offenses but scoff at the law because there is no consequence for their criminal behavior.

Councilmember Dozeman expressed her adamant opposition to this bill based on repeated complaints from residents about individuals arrested for serious, dangerous criminal behavior again and again without arrest and detention.

Mr. Goff proposed a consensus that the City oppose this bill, including testifying at the state legislature. Consensus achieved.

2. Delegation of Private Activity Bond Cap to Foothills Regional Housing

Discussion began at 7:43 pm, approximately 1:13 minutes into the session.

Issue

The City of Wheat Ridge has received an allocation of \$1,733,069 for the purpose of issuing Private Activity Bonds (PABs) in 2021 under the state ceiling imposed by the Tax Reform Act of 1987. Staff recommends assigning approximately \$450,000 of the City's allocation to Jefferson County Housing Authority d/b/a Foothills Regional Housing (FRH) which has agreed to issue PABs for the Allison Village redevelopment project in Arvada. Allison Village will be an affordable 100-unit, transit-oriented, environmentally sustainable community for youth, veterans and other low-income residents. The remaining allocation will be reserved for future affordable projects in Wheat Ridge, Jefferson County or Colorado.

Staff reports

City Manager Patrick Goff gave an overview of prior actions as the City of Wheat Ridge has traditionally assigned the City's PAB allocation to either the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) or the Metro Mayors Caucus for single family mortgage revenue bonds. The last allocation assignment was approved in 2011 to CHFA. Since 2011, neither CHFA nor the Metro Mayors Caucus were accepting applications for allocations because of the decline in the financial markets and the impact that has had on investor interest in PABs.

City Council assigned the City's 2019 and 2020 PAB cap to FRH for the Caesar Square Apartments project and even though there is no direct financial impact to the City of Wheat Ridge, injecting PAB capital into the community has a direct impact on real estate, construction, and financial markets by stimulating economic activity and jobs.

Ms. Rosendahl and Ms. Case discussed the background and current situations that underlie this request. Mr. Goff also explained that this local project in Arvada is another example of how this housing project benefits the entire region, like the two previous projects located in Wheat Ridge.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, including:

- The number of units in the Arvada project set aside for minors transitioning from foster care at age 18. (FHA representatives answered that there will be 30.)
- The City is excited about this cooperative housing effort to benefit not only Wheat Ridge but also the remainder of the region.

Councilmember Urban proposed a consensus to bring forward an action to Council to adopt the staff recommendations.

Consensus attained.

3. Staff Report(s)

This item began at approximately 7:54 p.m.

Mr. Goff thanked the Public Works staff for their outstanding work during the recent blizzard.

4. Elected Officials' Report

Councilmember Nosler Beck announced a virtual, City-wide town hall, on April 13th at 6 pm with Dr. Comstock from Jefferson County Public Health and other government leaders, to discuss issues of interest to Wheat Ridge residents. There will be a detailed press release and notices on our City Calendar and the City Webpage.

Councilmember Hultin also thanked the city staff for their work on clearing the snow. She also noticed that in some locations large mounds of snow from clearing parking lots are blocking sidewalks along our commercial corridors and she would appreciate some follow-up to make the sidewalks accessible and safe.

Councilmember Hutchinson has received several favorable comments about the plowing in our neighborhoods, including some streets that are not always plowed. Mr. Goff explained the City policy on plowing side streets; when there is a snowfall of 12 inches or more, then more streets are plowed.

The Mayor thanked the police chiefs and Rep. Duran for the discussion this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON April 12, 2021



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Janeece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem