

SPECIAL STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
City Council Chambers 7500 W. 29th Avenue
July 12, 2021

Upon adjournment of the Regular City Council Meeting, the Mayor called this Special Study Session to order at 7:47 p.m.

This meeting was conducted both as a virtual meeting and hybrid, where some members of the Council or City staff were physically present at the Municipal Building, and some members of the public attended in person as well.

After calling the meeting to order, Mayor Starker stated the rules and procedures necessitated by this meeting format.

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

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

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

Also, present: City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; City Manager Patrick Goff; City Treasurer Chris Miller; Director of Parks and Recreation, Karen O'Donnell; guests and interested citizens. Councilmember Hutchinson excused herself.

Public's Comment on Agenda Items –

Jerry DiTullio, Wheat Ridge resident, came to speak in support of the proposed City programs for the removal of dead trees, and trees or overhanging branches posing a high risk of falling and impacting persons and property, and in support of a tree re-planting program. He explained how these proposed programs will take advantage of grants available to defray the costs and encourage our residents to remove dead and otherwise dangerous trees/branches, and plant new trees. The financial impact to the City will prove minimal, especially compared to the extent of benefits to the City and our residents. Mr. DiTullio provided a handout to the Mayor and Council with details of the proposed plans.

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).

There were no citizen comments entered into Wheat Ridge Speaks related to this session.

1. City Tree Program

City Manager Patrick Goff presented the suggestions for a City Tree Program to start in the spring of 2022:

1. Create a grant program to help mitigate the cost of removing dead trees on private property. Limit the grant to 25 percent of the cost to remove the tree up to a maximum of \$1,000. First year funding capped at \$25,000 which would benefit up to 25 private properties annually.
2. Implement a tree sale program for Wheat Ridge residents at low or no cost to participants to encourage tree planting. Create a list of trees appropriate for Wheat Ridge and allow participants to choose from that list.
3. Work with a tree specialist to teach courses for Wheat Ridge residents in proper tree planting and care.

The Parks, Forestry and Open Space Division is working on a resident tree sale program for 2022. Residents will have the opportunity to place an order for trees with the City, which will result in a significant cost savings to the resident, as they will pay the amount that the City pays per tree during the annual bulk tree purchase. Essentially, a tree that would typically cost \$350-\$400 will likely cost around \$150-\$200. The program will have certain parameters, and will be offered on a first come, first served basis, as the City has finite storage for trees at this time. Orders will be placed in the fall and fulfilled in the spring. Other details are currently being ironed out, and staff will likely create and publish a resident survey on What's Up Wheat Ridge for feedback to fine tune the program.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers discussed the details of the proposed tree programs, plural. Several members commented on this support for both removing dead trees and planting new trees on private property.

Councilmember Weaver explained the steps involved in designating a tree for removal and obtaining a grant from the City to defray that cost as well as planting a tree. She explained that residents must remove dead trees if they pose a risk to others, so it is proper for the City to help with this program.

Ms. O'Donnell spoke about the highlights of the program and the preparatory socializing to support the proposed tree program. Mr. Zach Lovato of her staff described plans to acquire trees at a volume discount and resell trees to residents under this program, at cost.

Councilmember Hoppe asked about a property owner's rights to trim limbs from a tree sitting on contiguous neighboring property with limbs overhanging the neighbor's property. Mr. Lovato gave a detailed answer.

Councilmembers Hultin and Weaver expressed support for including funding in the current FY budget as well as additional funding in the 2022 budget. They believe that beginning these programs in the late summer and fall this year would make a difference vs. waiting another 8-10 months.

Councilmembers asked whether the staff recommends including partial removal of dying trees to the extent that they represent a risk to public health, safety or private property. Staff opined that including such trees in the program make sense.

Councilmember Weaver proposed two consensuses:

Consensus 1: Devote \$30,000 in this budget year (2021) to create a rebate program that will assist the taking down of trees on private property identified to be dead by a Parks and Rec Tree expert. Priority will be given to trees threatening property and or in street viewsheds. The rebate would be up to \$1500 per property (per year) and only for the cutting and disposal of dead trees (no stump grinding.) The city would administer the rebate program and Parks and Rec would offer the tree identification.

Recipients of the grant would be encouraged to replace trees through the tree sale and replacement program offered through Parks and Rec.

Consensus achieved.

Consensus 2: Devote more money in 2022 to expand the program (staff is researching a number) to include the following priorities of protecting and maintaining our mature tree canopy:

- 1) Pruning to maintain lifespan and safety
- 2) Disease prevention and control
- 3) Replacement of dead trees

Consensus achieved.

Staff Report(s)

Nothing further at this time, since staff made reports already in tonight's Regular Council Meeting.

Elected Officials' Report(s)

Nothing further, as this session immediately followed a Regular Council Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The Special Study Session adjourned at 8:37 pm.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON July 26, 2021.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Janeece Hoppe, Mayor Pro Tem