

STUDY SESSION NOTES
CITY OF WHEAT RIDGE, COLORADO
Hybrid - Virtual Meeting

May 2, 2022

Mayor Bud Starker called the Study Session to order at 6:32 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. A quorum of members (eight) of Council were present in Council Chambers for this session.

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

Mayor Starker 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 Scott Ohm, Amanda Weaver (virtually), Judy Hutchinson, Corey Stites (virtually), Valerie Nosler Beck, Janeece Hoppe, Leah Dozeman, and Rachel Hultin. (CM Hoppe excused herself at 8:15 p.m.)

Also present: City Clerk, Steve Kirkpatrick; City Attorney, Gerald Dahl; City Manager Patrick Goff; Director of Administration, Allison Scheck; Chief of Police, Chris Murtha; WR Police Department; Assistant to the City Manager, Marianne Schilling; Director of Parks and Recreation, Karen O'Donnell; Director of Community Development, Ken Johnstone; Planning Manager, Lauren Mikulak; Senior Neighborhood Planner, Jeff Hirt, interested citizens and guests.

Public's Right to Speak

No one came forward to speak this evening.

Note about Wheat Ridge Speaks:

Members of the public 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 the public 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.

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

1. Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan

Discussion of this item began at approximately 6:34 pm.

Issue

The purpose of this study session agenda item is for City Council to get an understanding of the purpose and anticipated outcomes of the Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan (“Plan”) and provide initial feedback on the project. Attachment 1 includes more detailed study session goals and three questions the project team would like for City Council to come to the meeting ready to discuss. This is the first of three anticipated Council meetings on this project in 2022.

Staff Reports

Senior Neighborhood Planner Jeff Hirt and his team, including **czb** consulting, are requesting that City Council give guidance on three key questions about this Plan:

1. What does the term “affordable” mean to you?
2. Who are you most concerned cannot afford to live in Wheat Ridge?
3. What do you want to learn or get out of this project?

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Councilmembers asked detailed questions about several topics, engaging in discussion among themselves and with staff, who answered their questions in detail:

- Thanked the staff and the consultants for their report and more so for their hard work.
- CM asked numerous, detailed questions of the czb consultants, responding to their detailed analysis of housing data and affordability in Wheat Ridge.
- How would czb’s interpret these data in terms of how decisions we make today and actions we take in the short-term will impact the availability of affordable housing?
- What kinds of incentives the City might offer to encourage more affordable housing in Wheat Ridge?
- Are STR or ADU an important tool for providing affordable housing, either for renters or for homeowners who use them to supplement their income to offset housing costs?
- In Wheat Ridge we have serious constraints on available land, zoning restrictions and other constraints. What can we do within our actual situation that would create more affordable housing?
- Will you recommend strategies for public communications to counteract some of the myths and conspiracy theories (e.g., section 8 residents are all unemployed druggies; affordable housing means more crime and blight...) about people who might live in affordable housing?
- We appreciate your approach that clearly distinguishes the issue of rental housing vs. homeownership.
- CM emphasized the importance of a communication strategy to inform our residents about what we are – and are not – trying to achieve through affordable housing.

- How can we ensure that our decisions and actions do not actually move us farther away from affordable housing, as has happened in other places when public policy backfires and increases housing costs?
- We have a significant concern that young families and older residents will never be able to afford to live in Wheat Ridge, and that some of them living here now will get priced out of town.

Our czb consultants ended the session with the advice that at the end of the day the cost of land is going to drive housing costs. Land will drive the future cost of housing, especially in a region with high job creation, high rates of pay and high desirability of living here.

2. Short-Term Rental Lodgers' Tax

Discussion of this item began at approximately 7:34 pm

Issue

Short-term rentals (STRs) are defined as dwelling units or portions thereof used for lodging accommodations for transient occupancy, for compensation, for a period of less than thirty consecutive days. STRs are subject to the City's 10% lodgers' tax, in lieu of sales tax.

At the Regular Business Meeting on March 28, 2022, Mayor Pro Tem Hultin and Councilmember Hoppe requested that the lodgers' tax pertaining to STRs be studied at a future meeting. Specifically, they requested to evaluate lowering the STR portion of the City's current lodgers' tax and dedicate those revenues to affordable housing and/or homelessness initiatives

Staff Reports

Director of Community Development, Ken Johnstone and Scott Cutler, Senior Planner, spoke on the issue including prior action of the November 15, 2021, study session, along with other proposed regulations, definitions, and code sections.

Councilmembers had questions and comments:

Staff came prepared to ask Council for guidance on seven different detailed questions and potential issues related to any policy decisions or ordinances, and staff and CM engaged in a detailed discussion of those seven questions. (Those questions appeared in the Council Packet for this meeting.)

Those seven topics/questions dealt with specific zoning, policy and likely scenarios that will develop for specific properties, especially certain unique or infrequently encountered situations.

Mr. Goff reviewed a range of options (six in all) Council has in terms of actions we might take with respect to STR taxes and how they would be expended when collected.

CM thanked staff for their presentation and their excellent preparation and groundwork.

CM had detailed questions and comments about an STR lodging tax, how to impose it, what rate to set and how to put something in place considering TABOR requirements. CM also discussed whether the best way to implement an STR tax is via a referendum to the voters, an ordinance, or a resolution.

CM discussed the possible STR lodging tax rate and several favored setting the rate at no less than 8 per cent.

CM also discussed whether to devote the new revenue to efforts in affordable housing and homelessness, to other uses or a combination. They also discussed how to make these decisions, how to engage the community and who else (what other groups or agencies) should be involved in the planning.

CM Hultin proposed a consensus to direct staff to move forward with option #1 in the packet, and devote the revenue to affordable housing and homelessness and to bring further details to Council in a Study Session.

Consensus attained.

3. Staff Report(s)

Mayor's Matters was published today. Our PIO, Sara Spaulding, has resigned effective May 20 to take a position on the Western Slope

4. Elected Officials' Report(s)

CM Nosler Beck expressed her appreciation for the availability of hybrid attendance as she cares for a sick child at home. She also reminded all that this week is a time to celebrate and thank our teachers.

CM Hutchinson, seconded CM Nosler Beck's sentiments about our teachers. She also asked about who is working in WR installing cable; she saw a new cable that hung just 4 feet above the sidewalk.

CM Ohm volunteered with Jeffco last week and found it very fulfilling. If there are other opportunities to volunteer and help our community, please, pursue those opportunities.

CM Hoppe

CM Dozeman announced that this

CM Hultin reminded everyone that this Thursday from 4:30-6:30 at the Rec Center we have a public meeting


May's edition of Coffee with the Mayor has been cancelled. Next Sunday is Mother's Day, so honor your mothers.

The Mayor thanked everyone for a productive meeting, and encouraged us to drive, cycle and walk carefully to protect one another.


ADJOURNMENT

The Study Session adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON May 9, 2022.



Steve Kirkpatrick, City Clerk



Rachel Hultin, Mayor Pro Tem