

Arvada City Council Meeting, July 20, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

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Visitability Vexations Vanquished; Home Buyer Loan Program Approved

In attendance were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, and Jerry Marks. Councilmember John Marriott was absent, and his absence was excused on a 6 to 0 vote.

At 6 p.m., attendance by citizens was 22. At 6:45 that number was 14.

The annual meeting of the Arvada Housing Authority convened at 6:00. Ed Talbot informed Council that the Authority has been given a "High Performer" rating by HUD on their 96% score for the 2014 SEMAP rating report.

Talbot added that the Housing Authority will be partnering with the Arvada Community Food Bank on a project called Bridges to Opportunity, which is an effort to secure Section 8 assistance for food bank clients who are homeless, in imminent danger of homelessness, or who are spending far too high a percentage of their low income on housing costs.

Talbot also reported on the City's Section 8 program. Arvada currently can assist up to 508 households with rent subsidies. The average City contribution is \$608 per month on an average rent of \$954. Clients of the Housing Authority are very low income and fall into the categories of elderly (39%), disabled (47%), minorities (28%), female heads of households (80%), and large families (9%). Councilmember Mark McGoff asked about the portability of benefits. Talbot explained that, after a year in Arvada receiving assistance, clients can move elsewhere and continue receiving Arvada benefits--even out of state. That is a feature of the federal program, but it works both ways--some people move here and continue to be subsidized by their previous location's housing authority. Right now there are 15 clients from other areas who are still receiving benefits from those jurisdictions, while only five of Arvada's clients receive benefits while not residing here.

The Annual Report was adopted by Council on a 6 to 0 vote, followed by adjournment of the Housing Authority meeting.

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Minutes from the June 29 Executive Session meeting were approved with no changes. That meeting was for performance evaluations for City Manager Mark Deven, City Attorney Chris Daly, and Municipal Judge David Cooke.

Minutes from the July 6 regular City Council meeting were approved with no changes.

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Public Comments:

Ashley Lapp of Ralston House invited all to the .5K (that's Point Five K, about three blocks) Endurance Challenge, a just-for-fun activity starting at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, August 1, convening at Olde Town Square. For those who survive the grueling race, there will be face paint, temporary tattoos, police and fire vehicles, musical entertainment, and even Princess Elsa from the movie Frozen, with autographs. Each participant will receive a special race bib to represent one of the more than 900 kids helped at Ralston House in 2014. Proceeds from the event go to help area child victims of abuse and neglect. Organizers from Arvada on Tap extended invitations to attend festivities on July 25 from noon to 8 p.m. at Ralston Park, next to Arvada West. There will be 20 craft breweries represented, a big Kansas City BBQ competition, a homebrew competition among 50 local home brewers, live entertainment, and a mechanical bull.

Amanda Stevens, candidate for Jeffco School Board, introduced herself and gave a brief rundown of her credentials. Born and raised in Jefferson County, she was an Honorable Mention for the National Merit Scholarship before running into difficulties as a teen. She later completed a GED, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's of Education, becoming a teacher in disadvantaged schools both in Chicago and here in Sheridan. A mom of two school kids, Stevens is a very involved member of PTA and a Choice Committee member. She believes greatly in transparency in school board decisions and processes, and in collaboration rather than conflict whenever possible.

A representative of the firm conducting the City's audits said that all divisions have had excellent scores this year. She thanked the financial team for their professionalism and cooperation.

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Consent Agenda:

Adoption of revised Strategic Plan. For a summary of the revised plan, here's a short, easy document that shows where a lot of our current and upcoming changes are originating:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/06.A.01.%20R15-095,%20A%20Resolution%20Revising%20the%20City%20of%20Arvada%20City%20Council%20City%20Strategic%20Plan%202014%20to%202019.pdf
(R15-095)

Bimonthly printing and mailing of The Arvada Report, Prairie Mountain Publishing, \$94,326.
(R15-096)

Traffic Signal Reconstruction: Beginning in about December 2015, the following intersections will have major improvements done by WL Contractors, for a total of \$851,294. 64th and Carr, 64th and Quay, 55th and Marshall, 55th and Salisbury Ct., and the fire signal at 57th and Zephyr. (R15-097)
Third amendment to employment agreement with City Manager Mark Deven: Yearly authorization of 3 percent salary increase. (R15-098)

Twenty-second (!) amendment to employment agreement with City Attorney Chris Daly: Authorization of 4 percent salary increase. Daly has been employed as Arvada City Attorney for 23 years, said Mayor Williams. (R15-099)

Second amendment to employment agreement with Presiding Municipal Judge David Cooke:
Authorization of 3 percent salary increase. (R15-100)

All items were approved, 6 to 0.

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Resolutions:

Homebuyer Assistance Program:

This was explored in a January, 2015 workshop. At issue is the extreme difficulty with which first-time homebuyers and/or low to moderate income buyers enter the housing market. Not only are there virtually no "starter" homes, there are almost no homes at all for sale in Arvada under \$250,000.

Ed Talbot, Executive Director of the Arvada Housing Authority, proposed in that workshop a partnership between the City and a nonprofit, the Colorado Housing Assistance Program (CHAC) to provide assistance with down payments and closing costs. These loans would go to qualified buyers, who might also be able to use additional funds, such as gifted money from parents, for example.

Councilmembers at the time were divided as to the usefulness of this program in a market with so little inventory. It was mentioned several times that there were, the day of the workshop, only 14 homes available for under \$300,000 in Arvada, including townhomes and condos. Fifer and Marks were generally supportive, Allard was not. Dyer and Marriott advised caution with the wording of agreements so as not to tie up a lot of money in an untested program, and Williams acknowledged the problem but thought this program could be window dressing, which was McGoff's concern as well. The proposal has been reworked to address control aspects. Initial funding would be \$150,000 per year as loans. (R15-101)

A representative of CHAC was on hand to give a breakdown of why such funding would be advantageous to everyone, as well as what the numbers would look like. She said that, statistically, the children of homeowners are 25% more likely to graduate from high school compared to children of non-owners; they are 116% more likely to graduate from college, 20% less likely to become teen mothers, and 59% more likely to go on to own their own homes.

Clients who earn below 80% of the area's median income are eligible for loan assistance directly from CHAC. With the added contribution from Arvada, help can be extended to people who earn between 80 and 115% of area median income. So a family of four could earn up to \$91,800 annually, and be eligible for loan assistance. Buyers in that income range could actually qualify for a number of homes which are currently available. Right now there are 23 homes on the market priced at \$300K or below, but there are over 100 homes priced above \$350K. With loan assistance bringing higher earners into the program, home ownership could become a reality for many who are just not quite able to get there on their own.

Arvada area rents are so high right now that it is common for a house payment to be lower than what a prospective buyer is paying in rent.

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Public Hearings:

Mahnke Auto Body is seeking annexation and rezoning, for the purpose of being in the Arvada Water District. (R15-102 and CB15-023 and -024)

Councilmembers Bob Dyer and Bob Fifer both noted that they are customers of Mahnke. Dyer said he's always thought of Mahnke as an Arvada company, and it will be nice for them to truly be that. This item was approved, 6 to 0.

Cimarron Park, extension of developer's Early Vested Rights to property at West 96th Avenue and Indiana Street. (CB15-025)

There was no public comment, and no questioning from Council. The item was approved on a 6 to 0 vote.

Vauxmont, extension of developer's Early Vested Rights to property north of State Highway 72 between Indiana Street and Highway 93. (CB15-026)

There was a request for clarification from Councilmember Mark McGoff regarding a culvert, followed by a 6 to 0 vote to approve the ordinance.

Repeal of "Visitability" provision to Building Regulations of the Arvada City Code: Visitability is a program which mandates certain features to be built into about a third of single-family homes and duplexes constructed after 2005, to allow access by people in wheelchairs or with walkers. To comply with visitability, a house must meet three requirements: zero-step entrance, 32 inches of passage in doorways, and a main-floor, wheelchair accessible bathroom. Due to lack of interest on the part of buyers, approval of this agenda item will repeal the provision. (CB15-027)

City Manager Mark Deven said that the majority of builders were choosing to pay penalties rather than including the amenities. Mayor Marc Williams noted that he and Councilmember Don Allard had opposed the "unnecessary government regulation" in the first place, and that Councilmember John Marriott would no doubt be in agreement as well, if he were attending tonight. The repeal was passed, 6 to 0.

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Public Comment: None.

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Reports from City Council:

Councilmember Bob Fifer said he had attended the annual picnic of the Columbine Neighborhood. There were 40 or 50 people at that event, whom Fifer said are "very engaged" in the well being of the neighborhood. He said the picnic was a great neighborhood strengthening activity, and that the party trailer was a welcome amenity which the neighborhood sent back with some added useful items included.

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Reports from City Manager:

Next Monday, July 27, there will be a workshop on the following topics: Blunn Reservoir Study, Westwoods Clubhouse update, and a first look at the Ten Year Financial Plan, with a focus on the General Fund.

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Report from City Attorney: None.

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The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.