

Arvada City Council Meeting, August 3, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

TDS: Catch TV has a Catch-22

Present this evening were Mayor Marc Williams and Councilmembers Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott. Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff and Councilmember Don Allard were absent.

At 6 p.m., attendance by citizens was 11; at 6:45 it was 13.

Minutes from the July 20, 2015 meeting were approved with no changes.

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Public Comment: None

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Consent Agenda:

Software upgrade: Wastewater Collection needs significant upgrades to its antiquated software. The City is contracting with the only bidder, Dawson Infrastructure Solutions, in the amount of \$67,640, to license and maintain IT Pipes software. (R15-103)

Lutz Overlook Trail: Jefferson County Open Space has granted the City \$140,000 for use in a trail and a pedestrian underpass between the east side of Kipling Parkway and the Lutz Sports Complex. The contractor for the Lutz portion of the project, which is priced at \$107,047, is Arrow J Landscape & Design. Work at Lutz will consist of about a one-tenth mile concrete trail extension to the Van Bibber Trail, tying it into the Oak Street underpass, as well as drainage and irrigation system adjustments to the soccer fields. (R15-104)

These items were approved, 5 to 0.

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Resolutions:

Revisions to intergovernmental agreement (IGA) regarding inter-city sharing of criminal justice records system: The original agreement created a separate legal entity to manage the records management system. Since that agreement, the police chiefs have decided it makes more sense just to have a cost-sharing agreement among the cities, and not use a separate legal entity. That change creates the need to revise the language in the IGA. (R15-105)

This was also unanimously approved, 5-0.

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Ordinances, First Reading:

Public Hearings for these items will be August 17, 2015, at 6:30 p.m.

APEX Park and Recreation District: Intergovernmental agreements with the City for the maintenance of parks, the athletic fields, and Ralston Central Park.

These were approved on a 5 to 0 vote.

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Item 7A: TDS Cable Television Update:

Background: Arvada is divided into two cable TV areas, and the west end is served by TDS Broadband, while the east side has Comcast. Comcast has been generally trouble-free and responsive to customers where its TV operations are concerned. However, there has been talk on Arvada social media of significant dissatisfaction with their internet service and lack of responsiveness to customers regarding problems with that.

In 2013, TDS Telecom--basically a phone company-- took over cable TV operations on the west end from Baja Broadband, which had a very dismal record with regard to operations, customer service, and just about any other form of measurement that can reasonably be applied to a service provider. Councilmembers have had, in the past, a huge and ongoing volume of complaints about Baja. Then TDS took over. In March of this year, Ken Paker appeared before Council to give an update on progress. Councilmembers were generally skeptical that significant improvements could be made in a timely manner. Councilmember Fifer, in particular, was persistent in pointing out weaknesses and significant differences in functionality between Comcast and TDS.

Paker reappeared this evening with good news about current improvements, news which was verified in part by City Attorney Chris Daly, who said that a TDS regional representative has been hired, and with that, customer complaints have dropped.

Paker said that a news product, Catch TV, was introduced in May, and that it is competitive with what Comcast offers. TDS seems to have listened to all the criticism and wish-list-items from the March Council meeting, and translated those into what appear to be a great start toward becoming a provider on a par with Comcast. Major changes, in addition to Catch TV and a regional representative, are an in-process diverse transport router, expected by the end of August and which will be inaugurated with a major marketing campaign, and the hiring of a direct sales manager.

Problems remaining are a Catch-22 type of staffing situation: without more customers, it will be a challenge to staff efficiently so as to have the right number of technicians. But without enough technicians, orders can't be filled in a timely manner, and complaints will increase to previous levels. Another big problem is that TDS is still operating under Baja's dispatch system, but only until later this year, according to Paker.

Councilmember Fifer commended Paker, saying, "I honestly didn't think you would achieve what you did in this time frame." Mayor Williams said he recently had service installed, and thought the technician was great, but may be spread too thin, especially on weekends. Paker said more technicians are being trained right now, and once trained can be used statewide wherever they are needed.

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Public Hearings:

Tower View Townhomes, Preliminary Development Plan: The developer, Keane Palmer, plans to build 18 for-sale townhomes at 7881 W. 51st Avenue. The homes will be in six separate buildings on a site which is over 40,000 square feet. One existing house will need to be removed. The 34-foot buildings comply with the comprehensive plan, with minor exceptions, and the Arvada Planning Commission voted 7 to 0 to approve the plan. (Agenda Item 8A)

Developer Keane Palmer and the architect, John Matthews of MA Architects, spoke to council. Matthews described the buildings as "contemporary," and built from permanent, quality materials. Each unit has three stories. A two-car garage accounts for the ground floor, with living areas above and bedrooms on the top. There will not be basements nor rooftop terraces, but the design allows for inviting open courtyards, said Matthews. Colors will be earth tones, masonry for the ground floor and stucco/composite siding above. The buildings will have flat roofs, vinyl windows, and metal railings. Storm drainage will be underground.

Public comment on the project came from a resident of a neighboring apartment building, who was concerned about noise, dust, hours of construction, and blockage of sunlight once the units are built. Palmer said he plans to comply with all standard protocol, there will be no weekend construction, and all neighbors will have phone numbers for Palmer and for the construction supervisor. The distance from the nearest unit to the man's apartment building is 17 feet, with a 6-foot fence to be constructed in between.

Mayor Williams asked Palmer how, given the current construction defects environment, he is able to build for-sale units. Palmer said he had acquired the land at a low enough price, and that while risks are inherent in this type of project, with the right insurance he believes he is adequately insulated from litigation. Williams said he recently heard from some attorneys that developers of for-sale multi-family units currently have over an 80% likelihood of being sued. Palmer agreed with that statistic.

The preliminary development plan was approved on a 5 to 0 vote.

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Public Comment: None

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Reports from City Council:

Councilmember Fifer attended the Ralston House .5K race and festivities on Saturday. He said it was a good-sized crowd, noting how much the event has grown since its beginning.

Councilmembers Marriott and Dyer, and Mayor Williams, thanked the LDS Church members for what Marriott estimates to be tens of thousands of dollars worth of volunteer labor at the church's service project over the weekend at Majestic View Park's Nature Center. Over 350 church members pulled weeds, painted, repaired, planted, and generally cleaned up the site. Councilmember Dyer wondered how many Arvadans are even aware of the Majestic View Nature Center, saying, "If people took the time to find it and go there, they might get some ideas for landscaping." He also noted that he recognized some of the LDS volunteers had worked on other projects, such as Sand in the City.

Mayor Williams said he and his wife will be at the Mother's Milk Bank, newly relocated to Arvada, for National Breastfeeding Month, and that tomorrow morning he will be at the Arvada Community Food Bank, boxing with a (fake) kangaroo for the tenth anniversary of the Food Bank's Backpack Program.

Reports from City Manager: Assistant City Manager Bill Ray said next week's workshop will cover the following four topics: The City's updated website; recommendations on capital improvements arrived at by the Citizens' Committee, CCIPC; an update to the Parks master plan; and the arterial beautification program.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50.