

Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, December 14, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Update; Neighborhood Engagement; Aging Assessment

In attendance were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Bob Fifer, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Nancy Ford, John Marriott, and Mark McGoff. Councilmember Dave Jones was absent. Six members of the public were present.

Senior Planner Kevin Nichols walked Council through all three presentations at tonight's workshop, beginning with the Comp Plan Implementation discussion. Our current plan was adopted in October of 2014, but, says Nichols, plans are only as good as their implementation. He asked for input from Council as to what activities and goals are priorities to be pursued. In particular, City Council has a Strategic Plan, giving a two-to-six-year outlook, and Nichols identified some items which might appear as Strategic Plan goals as it is next updated.

Some of those items include land use code updates, design guidelines for historic areas, becoming a Certified Local Government, and a Ralston Road corridor land use plan. Councilmember Marriott asked about that last one, saying he understood a Ralston Road plan had been done five or six years ago; Nichols agreed that a certain amount was done, but it was more transportation-based; now is the time for a full land-use plan engaging the community's input. There needs to be a determination whether the corridor remains commercial only, or if it should also address the area's housing needs, and work needs to be done directly with the community to understand concerns and goals.

Councilmember Mark McGoff asked for a recap of what would be involved in Arvada becoming a Certified Local Government. Nichols said it would require dedication of more staff resources, inventories of historic properties, design guidelines, and other things, and would enable access to some grants Arvada isn't currently eligible for. He said there are pros and cons to the process.

More priorities could include economic development, attracting jobs to the Candelas, Ralston Fields, and Olde Town areas; shopping center revitalization, a hospital, commercial diversification, and more non-retail jobs. Nichols also said there is an effort toward more business-friendly, flexible code updates. Director of Community Development Rita McConnell expanded on that, giving as examples the sign code, which has been labeled non-business friendly, and zoning, which could have more flexibility built into the code to allow for new uses as they are invented. She said many of those kinds of problems did get solved with the recent update to the land use table.

Additional priorities are transportation, including walking, bicycling, and transportation for seniors; organizing neighborhoods, expanding options for senior living, and helping seniors to become engaged through such things as volunteering; access to fresh food, for example by encouraging community gardens; education, culture, and the possible creation of an arts district; resource conservation, parks, public safety, and utilities.

Councilmember Don Allard sought to clarify a point about the water conservation. In its October 20 meeting, the Planning Commission discussed with Utilities Director Jim Sullivan the availability of water for a property under consideration for annexation. Sullivan clearly stated that right now there is only water available for 120,000 residents, not the full planned build-out of 140,000 people. Sullivan said, "we have drawn a line around the city to show what we can do." Allard asked if this is true; Mayor Marc Williams and Bill Ray said it is true until and unless the Gross Reservoir expansion happens. That expansion is opposed by both the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers as a threat to an "already degraded system" of water quality, so it is by no means a done deal.

There was discussion about water conservation and the possibility of having HOAs help to manage that. Councilmember McGoff said his small HOA has central water monitoring and billing, and has done a lot with meters, sprinklers, and other means of use reduction. Nichols said he would take the idea to Jim Sullivan. Councilmember Allard added that the land development code needs to emphasize reducing the amount of water use in landscaping. McGoff said there should also be monitoring of water plans that, once approved, might change down the road and not be conserving to the degree expected. Rita McConnell said the state requires an update of the 2010 conservation plan by 2017, and it's thought that there has been a five percent reduction in water use since 2010.

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Neighborhood Engagement

A City Council strategic result reads as follows: "By 2019, 50% of identified neighborhoods, who in 2013 did not have organized groups, will have organized neighborhood associations, HOAs, Councils or other leadership/engagement groups with whom the City can liaison."

Areas currently being worked on are Homestead Park, which has about a thousand homes; Terrace Park, also about a thousand homes, and Britton Park, about two thousand homes.

For more information on this effort, see:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/2.B.%20Neighborhood%20Engagement%20Update.pdf

Mayor Williams said there has been discussion among councilmembers that maybe they should attend block parties if the residents want them to, rather than holding town hall-type events and expecting citizens to come to them. Nichols said that works well for the police and fire departments.

There was extended discussion about reviving the neighborhood grant program; Nichols recommends that as a "carrot" to encourage the organization of neighborhoods, as well as to get neighbors working together and to beautify the city. He also said there should be a match from the recipients, in volunteer labor or in money, or both.

Councilmember John Marriott asked if there could be an exemption written into the rules for the grant program, disallowing deferred maintenance items which HOAs should be funding themselves, and which creates a non-level playing field when individual homeowners cannot receive funding for such things as fence replacement. He said otherwise he thinks it's a good program. Nichols said that right now there are a lot of HOAs applying for the funding, but as more neighborhoods become organized, there will be more non-HOA requests. Councilmember Bob Fifer added his distaste for projects which

are exclusive to residents of an area, such as one application for a community garden which would have been open only to the members of that HOA; he said if it's funded by the city, it shouldn't be fenced off. Councilmember Nancy Ford said she thinks there should be guidelines, and that there might need to be two different sets of grants, one for engagement and one for beautification. She also suggested a reward or contest program to get people excited about beautification and sustainability. She also said that a program encouraging litter control would make a huge improvement in the look of the city.

Mayor Williams asked what it would cost to reinstate the grant program. Nichols said it would be \$40,000. Williams said it looks like a lot of headaches, and asked the other members for their opinions.

Councilmember Marriott said he is OK with going forward--"I always look at the leverage it creates" but suggests refinement of the program, and that it be brought to council for suggestions when it is in its final form. Councilmember McGoff is strongly in favor of Neighborhood Improvement projects, and that the grant program is a part of that. He emphasized the aging of our neighborhoods.

Councilmember Fifer said he would support the program for another year, but thinks, along with Councilmember Ford, that it's evolving into two or maybe three things--neighborhood engagement, a grant program for repairs and updates, and maybe also conservation. He added that maybe the grant program could be tied to conservation.

Councilmembers Allard and Ford expressed concerns with the revival of the grant program. Allard said, "In principal, I'm opposed; it suppresses individual motivation...engagement with the City is an individual decision, and not government's job." Ford added, "I struggle, too--it's not really part of government's charge." She said there are reasons why people don't continue to maintain their properties. She said she would like to see smaller grants, and reiterated the need to classify HOAs differently from homeowners. She said cleaning up neighborhoods would make a huge visual improvement, as would such relatively low-cost options as planting more flowers.

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Aging Assessment: Silver Tsunami or Golden Age

Arvada's demographics, thanks to the Baby Boomers, is about to undergo a change: very soon, our largest age group will be over 60 years of age, and that will remain true well into the future. About 84% of Arvada's seniors are expected to remain here throughout retirement.

Some concerns brought about by the shift in demographics include affordable housing and help with essential home repairs, transportation, the availability of volunteer opportunities and other ways for seniors to remain engaged in the community; restrooms, better lighting, and senior-friendly exercise equipment in parks; more opportunities for community meals, and help with snow removal.

Kevin Nichols said we have some programs in place now, that can be built on. Councilmember Fifer suggested a commission on aging to address needs and advocate for services. Councilmember Marriott said it's good to observe the trend, but he's not sure a full-tilt involvement on the part of the City is what's currently needed. He added that many people fear the advent of the "Silver Tsunami," but said we don't know it's a bad thing--it may well be a Golden Age, with an incredible wealth of knowledge and wisdom, and problems we're imagining we'll have may never materialize. He advised monitoring

the situation rather than making it a mission of city government; that, although government should not "be the tip of the spear--we play a role." Pointing out that, demographically, the people with money here tend to be the older people, Marriott said that we want to have services for those in need whether they are elderly or not.

Councilmember McGoff said he's not sure a commission is the appropriate venue, but that there needs to be a look at aging. Recalling the upheaval the Boomers caused in childhood--resulting in a surge of schools and recreation facilities--he said our focus does need to change to be responsive to the anticipated changes in the age of the population.

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Staff updates:

City Manager Mark Deven said the January 11 workshop will include a presentation about a possible Science and Cultural District, and AEDA's updated funding requests.

Mayor Williams added that there will be no City Council meetings the next two Mondays, and wished everyone Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and the best for 2016.

The workshop adjourned at 8:25.