

Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, February 9, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Mayor Marc Williams was absent; the other Councilmembers were in attendance: Don Allard, Jerry Marks, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, Bob Dyer, John Marriott, and Bob Fifer.

Public attendance was about twelve people at 6 p.m.

The three topics of this evening's workshop were a presentation relating to forming a probation department, information and updates regarding City assistance to low income citizens, and a follow-up from AEDA accompanied by a request for ongoing funding.

Probation Department for Arvada Municipal Court:

Boulder Probation Department Head Greg Brown gave a presentation outlining what probation is and how it might be advantageous for Arvada's Municipal Court. Brown's department accepts only the highest-risk offenders, yet claims a 75% success rate. Other participants in the presentation were Judge David Cooke and Relief Judge Kristen Wheeler.

Arvada is the only city of its size in Colorado which does not have a probation department. Lakewood has one, which focuses on juvenile offenders and domestic violence cases. Judge Wheeler is also a relief Judge for Lakewood, and finds that the probation department there adds an element of efficiency as well as a "shortcut for judges to understand" each defendant better before making sentencing decisions.

Brown said it is established fact that, in many cases, prison only makes offenders worse. It is also expensive to lock people up, which is done in the U.S. more than in other places. So, in the probation system, first there is an elaborate and thorough intake interview done by highly skilled professionals, which takes quite a bit of time but results in a good idea of how high risk the offender is, as well as what process will work best to rehabilitate them and prevent them from re-offending. Brown said this is not a matter of someone deciding they have a good idea for a program, and hoping it will work--there are "evidence-based practices" in place around the country, which have been conclusively demonstrated to work extremely well. For example, a program might be tailored for someone who has just received their third DUI, taking into account the many factors at play in that individual's life. An effective intervention could save lives and property, return the offender to a useful place in the community, and result in increasingly more efficient use of City resources. Brown also pointed out that it is expensive to have a judge do what a probation officer would normally do.

First, said Brown, there is the intake interview, then the low-risk offenders --for example, a juvenile with a supportive family for whom this was a first offense--are sent on their way and would not be involved in probation. Medium and high-risk offenders would be channeled through established programs such as cognitive behavior therapy, GED programs, substance abuse programs, etc., as a condition of their probation. This, said Brown, is about helping the people reach goals, as opposed to telling them what to do. There are metrics from beginning to end to help measure progress. There is

also good follow-up for the court, including frequent communications between the court and the probation department.

So, how does all this relate to Arvada's Municipal Court? Judge Cooke said that, out of 14,000 cases, about 10,000 are traffic offenses. Also, the worst offenders would go through the Jefferson County Court system. Repeat offenders here often fall into the groups of drug and alcohol offenses and assaults--important challenges, he points out, for the community. Unfortunately, the judges usually have only a few minutes to dispose of each case (another situation which might be helped greatly by reducing caseload as the recidivism rate dropped) and have little concrete information on which to base their decisions. Sometimes the judges rely on information from the city attorney, but with a probation office there would be an intake summary and suggestions as to what might work for a particular offender. There would also be pre-sentence communication and supervision in the case of probation--none of which is in the scope or time frame of the city staff or judges.

Council input focused mainly on whether a probation department would be a helpful addition to Arvada's justice system and whether repeat offenders are a serious enough problem, here, to justify the expense. A consultant to conduct an in-depth analysis would cost approximately \$50,000. Mayor Pro Tem McGoff polled Councilmembers to see if there was support for hiring a consultant; he and Councilmembers Marks, Dyer and Fifer are in favor, Councilmember Marriott would like to consider the question further, and Councilmember Allard is opposed.

Assistance to Low Income Residents:

In response to questions raised in past months about some of Arvada's assistance programs, a workshop was presented by Communications Manager Maria Van Der Kolk, Finance Director Bryan Archer, Senior Planner Kevin Nichols, and Housing Director Ed Talbot. Very detailed information is available at:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.B.%20Financial%20Assistance%20Programs%20for%20Low-Moderate%20Income%20Citizens.pdf

The aging of Arvada's population was the subject of much discussion, as was Arvada's changing ethnicity. Both are factors in the types and extent of assistance expected to be needed, going forward.

First up was the sales tax rebate. It is meant to offset the fact that Arvada charges sales tax on food; very low income residents who are at least 55 years old or disabled can apply for and receive rebates of \$85 for the first household member and \$50 for each additional member. The sales tax on food generates about \$8.5 million per year. The rebate, in 2014, was \$133,289 or about 1.57% of the total amount of tax collected on food, and went to 1,243 applicants. This is paid from the City's general fund.

Resource Smart Arvada is a program in which grant money is used to help low income homeowners and multi-family units retrofit properties for greater energy efficiency. This is funded by a Livewell Grant and HODAG loan repayments.

The Section 8 housing program pays part of housing costs for very low-income residents. Currently, 39% of the program's clients are senior citizens. Depending on funding available from HUD, Arvada assists approximately 460 to 480 clients at a time.

Essential Repairs Program: This is to help lower income seniors and disabled people to stay in their own homes longer by providing grants and forgivable loans for making needed repairs. 79% of the program's recipients are seniors. This is funded by a grant and from loan repayments.

The Human Services Funding Pool makes money available to local nonprofits such as Hope House, Carin Clinic, and others. There are 25 to 30 applicants each year, which are screened by a committee using a set of criteria. This is funded by HODAG, CDBG block grant, and the general fund.

Block grant funds come with strict guidelines as to how the money must be used: it can benefit low/moderate income people directly, it can be used to reduce slums and blight, or it can be used in emergencies. Those are all the eligible uses that money can be put to.

Councilmembers expressed general satisfaction with the way these programs are being administered. Councilmember Bob Fifer did say he would like to see more emphasis on the aging population.

Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA) Sustainable Funding Request:

AEDA, a non-profit, has a volunteer board of 17 community and business leaders overseeing four staff members; the mission is to provide an environment which attracts new businesses and retains existing businesses, helping all of those to reach their highest potential. Funding comes from the City as well as interest from past loans made by AEDA.

AEDA is requesting \$500,000 for this year and expect to update the City regularly on progress. There are a number of programs used to attract and retain businesses. For more information on those, see:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.C.%20Arvada%20Economic%20Development%20Association%20%28AEDA%29%20Sustainable%20Funding%20Request.pdf

Executive Director Ryan Stachelski cited some examples of recent recipients: A manufacturer of micro precision control equipment was given assistance with compliance to fire codes, and \$50,000 was used for the Arvada Marketplace to "make sure it survives."

There was brief discussion. Councilmember Bob Dyer elaborated on some of AEDA's past accomplishments, including a loan to the State Land Board so that the Ridge Home property could be put to better use. Councilmember John Marriott said that this type of program gives a city a competitive advantage. He said he has participated in a similar program in another city, and that more than ten years ago he received a development grant which was very helpful to him.

City Manager Mark Deven said there will be more discussion at the March 2 City Council meeting.

There will be no City Council meeting next week due to the Presidents Day Holiday, and there will be no workshop on the 23rd, as Council will be interviewing applicants for various committees.