

Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, March 14, 2016

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Councilmembers present were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Bob Fifer, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Nancy Ford, Dave Jones, John Marriott, and Mark McGoff.

Public attendance was six people.

Topics of this workshop were an update to wireless communication facilities, and proposed solutions to funding for street upgrades and maintenance.

Wireless Communication Facilities Update

Because of large increases in the use of wireless broadband, more and larger facilities are being built all the time. Federal and state laws governing these facilities affect local governments' authority over siting and other considerations. Senior Planner Linda Hoover and former Mayor Ken Fellman presented the information. For details,

see:http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/City%20of%20Arvada,%20City%20Council%20Packet,%20March%2014,%202016.pdf

Fellman encouraged Councilmembers to advocate to the FCC that a federal database of sites would be very helpful. Apparently that information is only available on a local level, if at all; the carriers who own the equipment tend to look upon that information as proprietary.

Arvada's interest in the matter is largely esthetic; encouraging carriers to co-locate equipment or to camouflage it is a high priority.

Proposals will go before the Planning Commission on May 3, and to a City Council public hearing, June 20.

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Infrastructure Funding Strategies (Money for Streets)

The City Council participated in a retreat on January 30. One topic of discussion was the shortfall in funding for better maintenance of the city's streets. The Citizens' Capital Improvement Project Committee (CCIPC) which met last year to help prioritize use of available city funding, found that the streets were a very high priority item. However, after a great deal of deliberation on the subject, that committee concluded that another, permanent source of funding needs to be identified, as opposed to making it a yearly Capital Improvement (CIP) budget item. A slide presented at tonight's workshop showed that even dedicating 100% of CIP dollars through 2024 would be insufficient to meet the cost of street maintenance.

Keeping the streets at their current level of repair would cost about \$16 million per year, over the next ten years; \$9 million more per year than is currently being funded.

I recommend looking over the information in the Council packet. You'll need to scroll down past the part about wireless towers/antennas, etc.:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/City%20of%20Arvada,%20City%20Council%20Packet,%20March%202014,%202016.pdf

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, no mention was made during this long discussion, of how much sales tax and property tax revenue is diverted on behalf of AURA and developers, due to the proliferation of urban renewal projects. In other words, the citizens pay enough, maybe, to cover adequate street maintenance and other needs, and in a perfect world that would definitely matter. In reality, though, that money is largely siphoned off any time there is an urban renewal district.

Tonight's discussion centered around possible ways to close the gap between what is needed to fix the streets, and what money is available. In particular, an increase in either sales tax (such as .5 percent) or property tax could be plenty to provide the extra funds needed. As Councilmember Mark McGoff pointed out, there is a lot of value in reviving the streets sooner rather than later, because streets go for a long time with very little degradation, but at a certain point in their life cycles, the deterioration accelerates. So a dollar's worth of maintenance on a ten-year-old street definitely buys more than for a twenty-year-old street.

Some other revenue generators used at times by other cities include charging fees based on per household unit, per vehicle, or per foot of sidewalk; these have the advantage to cities that they can be imposed by a vote of City Council, rather than having to be approved by voters, as do tax increases. However, they are burdensome to administer and seem not to be very popular with cities for that reason. So that most likely leaves increases to either sales tax or property tax.

To add to the confusion, the state may also be putting a sales tax increase proposal on this year's ballot, with proceeds to fund street and highway maintenance. Mayor Marc Williams said some of that money, about \$3 or \$4 million, should filter down to Arvada.

Councilmember John Marriott pointed out that a sales tax increase might cause people to avoid certain expenditures altogether, or to buy things where taxes are lower. But, he said, although property owners would pay the increase in property taxes, they'd be likely to pass along those increases to their renters, who may not be able to afford paying more.

If funding is identified, there are plans in the works to widen 72nd from Kipling to Simms, along with a desired \$31 million to maintain the arterial streets (such as Simms and Pomona), \$17 million for neighborhood streets, such as Ames or Benton, and \$15 million for the concrete portions such as curbs and gutters.

Mayor Pro Tem Bob Fifer said there's no good way to look at it, and that it's a tough subject. Councilmember Marriott strongly suggested "prioritizing our spending" in other areas before asking the public for more money. He said at this point he would not support financing in this way.

Councilmember Dave Jones said he would echo much of what Marriott said, and that it's frustrating that the whole country is now experiencing this problem. He asked about the availability of grants. City Manager Mark Deven said that grants are highly competitive, and almost all of them are for funding expansion of capacity (widening streets) as opposed to street maintenance.

Jones asked if a smaller sales tax increase, such as 1/8 percent, had been looked at. Deven said that might mean going back again and again for more small increases, or to word a ballot measure incrementally, but then there is a risk of the voters finding that confusing. Jones said how much might the cost of street maintenance increase over time. Deven said much more if something isn't done soon.

Deven suggested polling citizens to get an idea of how voters might feel about increases to sales or property tax. He also pointed out that polling can also be used as an educational tool depending on how questions are worded. He said that in Colorado, nine cities asked for tax increases on the last ballot, and seven of those were approved. After years of recession, where cities were just trying to keep basic services available, now a lot of catch up is needed to take care of our biggest asset. If that doesn't happen, Deven says, we will be in "very, very, very dire straits."

Councilmember Don Allard said he agrees with Councilmember McGoff, that it makes sense to go to the taxpayers, who already know there is a problem with the streets. If the voters say yes, then it happens.

Mayor Williams said he questions whether it's feasible to go to voters if the statewide measure is on the ballot at the same time. He recommends polling. He said when looking at the combined tax, which would include such entities as RTD, "we cannot get to 10%, or ramifications in terms of spending go to heck." He said the city also expects to benefit from sales tax collection by Amazon, but no one is sure of how much that will amount to. He said the citizens should decide, not "us seven" on City Council.

Councilmember Nancy Ford said she believes if the citizens can be educated sufficiently as to the urgent importance of bringing the streets up to a proper level of maintenance, the citizens will agree. Councilmember McGoff said he favors polling. Councilmember Marriott said he does not. Ford asked, if we poll and the citizens say no, then what? Williams said then that says there's a lot more educating to be done. Councilmember Jones said he agrees there needs to be education, and that polling can be the mechanism for that. Councilmember Allard said he is not in favor.

Councilmember Ford also advocates for working toward getting more of the money from the federal government back to the local governments.

The discussion completed, the workshop adjourned at 8:00.