

Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, April 27, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

In attendance were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Jerry Marks, John Marriott, and Bob Fifer. Public attendance was about six people.

This workshop dealt with consideration of a cultural and arts commission and some revisions to City Council's Strategic Plan.

Cultural and Arts Commission

Arvada's Arts Council is responsible for three main areas: Arvada Center fundraising, budget, and general activities; public art; and community advocacy for the arts and humanities. Proposed changes in the governance of the Arvada Center would limit responsibility of that governing body to concerns of the Arvada Center. That would leave public art works and community advocacy without an agency to oversee those concerns.

Clark Johnson, COO of the Arvada Center, presented options and ideas about a proposed Arvada Cultural and Arts Commission. Speaking of surrounding communities, Johnson showed how they handle those responsibilities. Lakewood, he said, has a long and robust history of support for the arts, complete with a dedicated city department. Westminster has a public art program, and funding from several areas, including a built-in requirement for developer contributions to public art projects. Aurora has two committees, a 9-member Public Art Commission and an 11-member Cultural Affairs Commission. Similarly, Wheat Ridge has a 9-member Cultural Commission.

The mission of Arvada's commission would be "To focus on community engagement, to foster arts and culture and to preserve cultural and historical assets." If City Council wished, the commission could be finalized as early as 2016.

Councilmember John Marriott had concerns that it might be putting the cart before the horse, to contemplate this commission before anything has been decided on Arvada Center governance. He would also prefer to have a cost estimate. Also, if the Arvada Center governance does change, Marriott sees them as a potential resource in setting up the cultural and arts commission. He confirmed with Johnson that maintenance of existing art is driven by city staff, independently of what commissions exist.

Councilmember Bob Fifer, on the other hand, worried that the lengthy application process might mean that some helpful or necessary functions could fall to the side if work on a commission isn't underway when and if Arvada Center's governance does change. Councilmember Mark McGoff agreed and said the timing right now is just right, because if the Arvada Center governance is approved in July there is time to advertise in the Arvada Report for applicants. City Clerk Chris Koch confirmed that the request for applicants would need to be in by October to appear in the December/January Arvada Report, with appointments to be made in April of 2016.

Councilmember Don Allard said he's not in favor of adding another activity and more cost to city government, and also would like to see the timing coincide with budget decisions. He said the arts commission is not one of his top priorities, compared with streets, for example, and traffic problems in the northwest area. He predicted that Indiana will be "such a mess that it won't be tolerated by the citizens."

Mayor Williams said that part of what makes Arvada great is its commitment to culture, but that he shares Allard's cost concerns. Nor does he want a commission at cross purposes with the Arvada Center, for example, in the fundraising arena. As to the budget of the proposed commission, Williams said it should be clear what it is from the outset--otherwise, "if we don't go into it with our eyes wide open, we do a disservice to whoever we appoint and to the taxpayers."

Fifer said it might be that a cultural commission could synergize and provide a connection between other groups.

Williams said he is also worried about "mission creep," and that a mission statement would need to address that.

City Manager Mark Deven said that this workshop was to bring to council what staff has studied so far. Next will be to develop a cost estimate and identify funding sources. He said Allard is right, a commission can't be set up outside of the budget process, and Marriott is also right, that if the Arvada Center governance changes don't happen, "we can put the brakes on this."

Allard told Williams, "You don't have to 'worry' about mission creep--because you know it's going to happen." Williams said, "Right, Death, Taxes, and Mission Creep."

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Strategic Plan Revisions

During the January City Council retreat, staff presented some proposed revisions to the wording in the Strategic Plan. For detailed information, see:

http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.B.%20City%20Council%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20Revised.pdf

One change has to do with juvenile offenders. Municipal Court Judge David Cooke spoke about alternatives to traditional community service. He listed four Arvada programs for youthful offenders: a judge-mentor program between the judge and higher-risk kids and their families. Another allows a community service equivalent--for example, if an unemployed 17-year-old might receive community service credit for such activities as job skills development, job searching, and obtaining a GED. A very successful program is Moral Reconciliation Therapy™, a type of cognitive behavioral therapy which offenders pay to attend, and finally, there is a life skills and decision making program available through the Jefferson Center for Mental Health.

Another change is in the wording regarding water conservation. The original goal was to reduce community water use from 18,450 acre feet to 17,750 acre feet. To make the wording more understandable to the average person, in the proposed revision the goal is to reduce personal water consumption from 146 gallons per person per day, to 139. Councilmember Allard prefers addressing irrigation as opposed to per person use. In particular, he said, "Everyone likes bluegrass, but it's the worst thing you can do in a desert climate."

Following some brief discussion about street maintenance and conduit placement, the workshop concluded at 7:05.