

## **Arvada City Council Workshop, May 12, 2014**

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Mayor Williams was absent, leaving six councilmembers in attendance: Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott.

The three areas of discussion for tonight's meeting were a business improvement district for Olde Town, a plan for significant work to be done along Ralston Road between the Wadsworth Bypass and Kipling Street, and inclusion in the policy manual of rules governing the naming of public places.

The business improvement district (BID) idea for Olde Town was met with very little enthusiasm ten years ago when it was floated. Times have changed, and the Historic Olde Town Association (HOTA) has been collecting signatures on a petition which would allow the BID to go to an election. It involves assessing each property owner based on the value and square footage of their properties. The city would match the funds.

Only private properties would receive the assessment. About eighty percent of the Olde Town businesses have expressed support, and HOTA believes they will collect signatures from over half the businesses affected.

Originally, the intention was to include businesses north of Ralston Road, between Teller and Yukon Streets. That is no longer the case, and the businesses to be included are situated between Teller and Yukon, from the south side of Ralston Road to the railroad tracks. There was some discussion involving other areas of town such as the 9-acre development, which could be added later.

No churches or public buildings will be assessed, but the city will provide matching funds to go with the approximately \$68,000 the 5.5 mil assessment is expected to raise.

HOTA President Karen Miller answered questions for the councilmembers. Bob Dyer commended HOTA for their hard work. Miller said they intend to collect signatures through the end of this week. Bob Fifer asked if there is a budget for the expected \$130,000. Miller said that the BID board would determine the budget, and everyone wants to see a marketing program; other items will include enhanced maintenance, sidewalks, snow removal, and safety improvements.

Fifer said he thinks there will need to be very clear language spelling out who has what responsibilities; if the city is spending \$68,000, would they still need to do snow removal? He wants to make sure there is a clear cut understanding of what the city is responsible for, and said there has been a lot of confusion over various things such as who should put up and take down Christmas lights, for example.

Fifer asked if HOTA and the BID board would merge into one entity; Miller said that is yet to be determined.

Councilmember Jerry Marks said that he is in favor of the BID, but had questions pertaining to a time frame for phasing out the City's participation if, for example, increased income due to the Gold Line meant the City's matching funds would not be needed as much; his other scenario was, what if Westwoods or 80th and Wadsworth, for example, want to join as well, can they be added later?

Mark Deven said that, as a general rule, the city match would be in the ten-year financial plan, but that City Council can ask to allocate however they see fit, and it can be taken on a case-by-case basis.

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The next discussion centered around some major modifications planned for Ralston Road, between Kipling and the Wadsworth Bypass. The traffic engineers responsible for studying these plans have identified a number of problems affecting safety and pedestrian appeal along Ralston, and have developed a short-term and a long-term set of strategies for dealing with those problems.

The relatively narrow lanes along parts of Ralston Road are believed to be a big part of the reason for Ralston Road's significantly higher rate of accidents than comparable east-west roads in the vicinity. For each million miles driven in 2006 through 2009 along Ralston Road, there were 24.8 car accidents, compared with 6.9 for West 72nd Avenue and 5.9 for West 80th Avenue. Also, there are many areas along Ralston which have no sidewalk at all, or have substandard sidewalks, or too little clearance between the road and pedestrians.

The solution being worked out currently involves widening lanes, removing the median in some areas, combining some left and right turn lanes, widening (or in some cases installing) sidewalks, and in some areas adding a buffer between the sidewalk and the roadway. The area directly south of King Soopers has the exact configuration of what is called a Modified 4-Lane Compact. In general, there would not be any bike lanes, nor on-street parking. Also, there are plans to add a traffic signal at the main King Soopers entrance to aid pedestrians in crossing the street there.

The engineering team has done the following preparatory work: interviewing the public to see what kind of ideas were put forth as concepts for how Ralston Road should look; a "Main Street" with mainly independent businesses was heavily favored. Then began a meeting process involving the merchants and other property owners alongside Ralston Road. Of ninety-four properties, seventy-six are private businesses or residences, one is a school, seven are city-owned, and ten are owned or controlled by AURA.

Of the seventy-six privately owned properties, sixty-nine were involved in a preliminary meeting with engineers to alert them of what's coming and to see what their ideas or concerns might be. Sixty-five of those owners went on to have a second meeting with engineers, the remaining four being content with what they learned during the first meeting. After the second meeting with the sixty-five owners, all but seven were considered to be "generally supportive" of the plans.

There are two phases to this plan. The first involves spending about \$322,000 for sidewalk improvements where they are most needed along the length of Ralston. The second would be implementing the changes to the lanes and sidewalk areas, plus any traffic signals deemed necessary, which is estimated as costing approximately \$2.9 million from Kipling to Independence, \$2.5 million between Independence and Garrison, \$4.9 million Garrison to Carr Streets, \$4.4 million for the section between Carr and Olde Wadsworth, and \$1.8 million from Olde Wadsworth to the bypass, totaling \$16.7 million for the entire project.

One hitch is that the \$322,000 is for largely "temporary" improvements which may be in part wiped out as the street changes are made. This drew comments from Bob Fifer and Don Allard, who were concerned that it seems like a lot of money for "temporary" improvements. However, Mark Deven said that the city may not be able to begin other work for five or six years, and that the sidewalks are

something that can be done now. One important thing to note is that there are no plans to rip out good, relatively new sidewalks anywhere along Ralston.

Councilmember John Marriott pointed out that there are many places along Ralston Road where people are walking and there is no sidewalk, as evidenced by the fact that no weeds grow there. He said that it is important to do something and he believes the \$322,000 for immediate improvements would be a good investment. Councilmember Bob Dyer pointed out that many things the city does turn out to be somewhat temporary, and gave as an example the handicap ramps which had to be torn out because the standards changed.

Fifer said that he wanted to stress a point, that a person whose home is along Ralston Road has on his property a large tree, the second largest of that species tree in the state, and that if the tree is messed up he will "have our hide." Fifer urged not doing "temporary" work at that address and then going back later to do the permanent work, risking damage to the tree.

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The final item on tonight's agenda was the portion of the City Council Policy Manual having to do with the naming of buildings, streets, parks, and other public places.

These four questions were discussed:

Should the Arvada Center be part of this policy, or excluded from it?

Should naming streets be part of this policy?

Should there be a finite time frame, or should the policy give Council the leeway to rename?

Under what conditions should anything be named after a living person?

For the first question, Councilmember Dyer recommends looking over the Arvada Center's specific policy carefully, and only then to consider including the Center in the policy manual. Also, the Parks Advisory Committee has a policy which can be cross-referenced in the Policy Manual. He also said he'd like to take a look at what policy Denver City and County uses, and mentioned as an example the Toyota Elephant Experience at the Denver Zoo.

Mayor Pro Tem McGoff brought up the question of what would happen if the right money offer was made from some private enterprise such as Office Depot, for example, and the private partnership operating the Arvada Center was in favor of it, would it be allowable to rename the Arvada Center the "Office Depot Arvada Center," and that that should be addressed in the Policy Manual.

The second question, renaming of streets, drew some discussion as to temporary renaming after a celebrity, for example, as is sometimes done in Denver. The general consensus of Councilmembers is that Arvada has followed the Denver Grid System since the late 1940's, and should continue to do so as a rule; if there is a good reason to consider deviating from that system, it needs City Council approval.

In response to the third question, involving a finite time period, Councilmember Dyer said that the policy for the Arvada Center had a finite time frame. McGoff said that for sure there should not be a "fixed" period of time, due to the difficulty of keeping track of those time periods for each name.

For the fourth question, naming anything after a living person, Councilmember Marriott suggested wording such as, "In general we don't" name anything after a living person, rather than either saying "never" or else trying to define all possible circumstances in which the Council would or would not do that.

Councilmember Fifer read a passage from the Douglas County policy book which is reviewed with new councilmembers. He said the passage is very impactful, helping to clarify the members' mission. It talked about outward vision, encouragement of diversity, the relationship between the county board and its manager, looking to the future, and being proactive. Fifer suggested similar wording in the Arvada City Council manual, as well as review each time there are new council members. He added that after every new council is seated, the manual should be reviewed to see if there need to be amendments made on the basis of the new members' preferences and outlooks.

The business concluded, the meeting adjourned at 8:15.