

Arvada City Council Meeting, June 1, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

Wanted: Miracles

Six councilmembers were in attendance: Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott. Councilmember Bob Fifer was excused.

At 6 p.m., attendance by citizens was 20.

Minutes from the May 18 meeting were approved with no changes.

Public Comment:

On November 17, 2014, City Council approved a resolution placing Mikia and Harry Parker in charge of the Arvada Indoor Equestrian Center in exchange for a payment of 1 percent of the Parkers' total revenue. The agreement also stipulated that the facility would house a non-profit organization, and in early 2015, an organization called Miracles Therapeutic Riding moved into the facility. Miracles is an organization which allows special-needs children to develop skills riding and caring for horses. Horses are often found to have unique abilities to connect with people who otherwise have difficulties establishing warm relationships or developing basic skills.

In a January 15 interview with the Denver Post, Mikia Parker said, "We're really going to push programs for the entire community so anyone who is interested in being around horses, even if they don't have their own, can come here."

But tonight's public comment told a very different story, about what Miracles Therapeutic Riding and their clients actually experienced. Miracles' operator Chris Griffith said the group moved in with the understanding that they would be partners with the Parkers, helping to keep the facility clean and in good order, and caring for the horses. But, she said, as soon as the group moved in, things began to change, and at the end of March the group was given a one-day notice that their costs were about to skyrocket. Even after she raised the necessary money, Griffith says she was then presented with a 22-page contract revoking almost all ability for her students to use the facility in the ways they had been doing; for example, students could no longer help care for the horses, only ride them, and only be in the arena when they were having lessons. Some students are in wheelchairs, which if motorized were also banned from the stalls.

Several parents spoke about the considerable benefits their children had found through riding therapy at Miracles, and their extreme disappointment at the treatment they say the organization received from the Parkers. One parent, Eric Hoffman, asked, "Is this the kind of people Arvada wants representing them?"

Mayor Marc Williams directed the problem be turned over to staff to look over more fully, and to report back to City Council.

As the result of the current situation they are in, Miracles Therapeutic Riding is experiencing a financial crisis. To help financially, <http://www.gofundme.com/savemiracles>
More information will be posted here as it becomes available.

In other public comment, Mary Jo Giddings invited Arvadans to the Historical Society's annual garden tour, Saturday, June 27 from 9 to 1. Because the flour mill is in the construction zone, the \$15, self-guided tour will be starting from the Arvada Center this year.

Alvin Maes invited everyone to the Arvada Festivals Commission's Trails Day at Majestic View Nature Center, Saturday, June 6. This is a celebration of America's magnificent trails system, and will include hikes, bike riding, vendors, representatives of Denver Zoo, Denver Aquarium, and Hawk Quest, as well as free hot dogs provided by the Arvada Fire Department.

Resolutions:

Van Bibber Trail Extension, Kipling Underpass: The City is entering an agreement with CDOT to design and construct a bike and pedestrian underpass below Kipling Parkway, just north of West 56th Place. There is a total federal grant for the project of \$1.6 million, and the City's funds total \$332,600. Money has already gone toward the design of the underpass, and this agreement pertains to the remainder of the funds and how they are to be allocated. There are also easements from Arvada Cemetery and the Arvada Ridge Apartments. Construction is expected to begin in July. (R15-075 and -076)

Both items passed, 6 to 0.

Tax Share Back Incentive, Steuben's Restaurant:

The former Gunther Toody's has attracted the attention of a restaurateur, Steuben's Food Service. Steuben's has a Denver location and would like to open their second restaurant here in Arvada. However, Steuben's is citing various challenges which cause them some hesitation, including site access, location, acquisition cost, and the condition of the building. Steuben's would like assistance in the form of tax incentives amounting to \$211,500 or half of the 3% sales tax revenue generated by the restaurant over a 7 year period, whichever comes first. (R15-077)

City Manager Mark Deven said there is no risk to the city, as the incentives will come directly from revenue produced by the restaurant. Josh Walcott, owner of Steuben's, spoke briefly, saying that both the COO and the Executive Chef are from Arvada and everyone is very excited at the prospect of opening here.

Councilmember John Marriott said that these types of economic incentives are always tough to decide on, but that he would be voting for this one because it's a good beginning in activating the north side of Ralston Road. He said it is extraordinarily important to take every opportunity to do so, and that he and his family will be spending a lot of money in Steuben's.

Mayor Williams echoed Marriott's sentiments, adding that the City isn't writing a check to get this business into town, but that without a rebate they would not be able to locate here. He cited access problems with the site, but noted the great visibility as well. He said Steuben's reputation alone would get people into the restaurant. Walcott estimates an opening sometime in 2016.

Approval of this item was 6 to 0.

Public Hearings:

Intergovernmental Agreement with RTD, Redesigned Olde Town Transit Facilities:

This item is to modify the original agreement to bring it in line with the updated design. For example, the pedestrian bridge between the garage and the platform area is not being built, so language referring to it can be taken out of the agreement. (CB15-019)

There was no public comment, nor questions from Councilmembers.
The agreement was approved on a 6 to 0 vote.

Moore Brothers Farm, Annexation and Rezoning:

The more than 100-year-old, fifty-acre Moore Brothers Farm at 72nd and Ward was never annexed into Arvada, although it has been owned by the City since 2003, while the brothers remained on the property. Right now 4-H is using the property to raise one calf, there is a caretaker in the house, and haying operations continue.

The purpose of these agenda items is to annex the farm and rezone it from Jefferson County Agricultural to Arvada Conservation. The City plans to use it for open space and educational purposes as a working farm. There are plans to extend Ward Road through the property at some point, from 72nd to 80th Avenues, but tonight's items are strictly about the annexation and rezoning. Linda Hoover of the Planning Department said that the traffic engineers have stated there are no funds available to put the road through, and that it appears that will be at least ten years out. The City has promised to preserve the land as open space, and Parks Department director Gordon Reusink is encouraging residents to provide feedback regarding uses of the property. (R15-078, CB15-020, and CB15-021)
There was no public comment, and after brief remarks by Council, votes were taken, which resulted in approvals of all three items on 6 to 0 votes.

Public Comment: None

Reports from City Council: None, but a vote was taken to cancel the June 22 workshop.
That passed, 6 to 0.

Reports from City Manager: The June 8 workshop will include a presentation by the Neighborhood Engagement Team, as well as information on building code changes.

Report from City Attorney: None

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50.