

## Arvada City Council Meeting Workshop, July 27, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

In attendance were Mayor Marc Williams, Mayor Pro Tem Mark McGoff, and Councilmembers Don Allard, Bob Dyer, Bob Fifer, Jerry Marks, and John Marriott.

Public attendance was approximately 60 people, with the majority of those identifying themselves as residents of the West Woods area.

Topics for this meeting: Modifying uses of the City's 1,600 acre site east of Highway 93 between W. 64th Avenue and Leyden Road; Design update for the West Woods Golf Course Clubhouse, and City Council's Ten Year Financial Plan.

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Blunn/Pioneer Master Plan Study:

The 1,600 acre site, making up 7% of Arvada's land mass, has a long history of dual uses. Current uses include water storage, air modelers facility, dog park, disc golf, communication towers, fishing, trails, prairie dog preserve, water treatment facilities, and reserved space for the Jefferson Parkway.

Director of Utilities Jim Sullivan presented options and answered questions from Council.

Because 470 acres of this site was formerly a gravel mine, reclamation rules apply, and the deadline for reclamation is the end of 2017. Reclamation will include extensive leveling, drainage, and re-vegetation, so the City wants to explore possible uses now, to allow the reclamation plan to accommodate those uses. Three-fifths of the reclamation will be done by Pioneer Sand and Gravel, which has a ten-year lease at the site. The remaining two-fifths will be done by Arvada.

New uses explored included the following:

- Bike Park
- Changes to the Disc Golf Course
- Composting Center
- Expansion of Dog Park
- Maintain Visual Corridors
- New Trails
- Preservation of Stone Circles/Teepee Rings
- Public Shooting Range
- Police Training Center
- Relocation and Fencing of Prairie Dog Preserve
- Relocation of Air Modeling Facilities
- Solar Generation Center
- West Woods Golf Course Improvements

Public response:

As of last week, over 350 website comments and numerous phone calls have been received, a city-wide survey had 200 responses, and two public meetings garnered attendance of more than 220 people. Based on that public input, the City's planning has incorporated citizen ideas.

Some of the changes offered for consideration are better protection of the teepee rings, a composting transfer station, a bike park, and a solar generation station. Of comments received to date, a majority (53%) oppose the shooting range, 51% support protection of the teepee rings, 58% support a bike park, 54% are in favor of a solar generation station, and 64% are supportive of a regional compost center where residents could take leaves, grass, and branches, and restaurants could take organic material. Processing of the materials would not occur onsite, and the compost center would not be expected to produce an objectionable level of odors, according to the City.

No environmental impact statements are required for any of the proposed uses, and there will be no changes in use of any wetlands, although areas where there was no water prior to the gravel operation must be drained as part of reclamation. Also, if the Jefferson Parkway is built, that will need a great deal of environmental review beforehand.

On the north end of the site is a thirty-acre area where Native Americans once lived, leaving behind stone circles not visible at the surface. This land is adjacent to, but apart from, the Jefferson Parkway easement, and from all other uses. Sullivan said there are about 250 of this kind of Native American sites identified along the Front Range, but this is one of the largest remaining, and many of the other sites have been lost to development. Councilmember Bob Dyer clarified that the only access to the area is by walking, not by bike or car, and that will continue to be the case; Dyer hopes to protect it as much as possible from vandalism.

A prairie dog habitat is close to the stone circles and possibly impinging on them, which is one reason for relocation and improved containment of the prairie dogs; another is that they are approaching the neighborhood to the east of their preserve. Sullivan said that containing them would be economical, because there would be a slope on one side of their preserve, a natural discouragement to prairie dog digging, and all that would be needed is a fence on the other side. The fence will also serve as a barrier to minimize human intrusion into the habitat.

The Arvada Dog Park could be expanded. It's managed by a citizen's group, and depending on funding from that group, it can extend onto a third parcel originally set aside for revegetation. From above, Blunn Reservoir is shaped like a bird; the dog park expansion would go right up to the bird's lower leg. Because it's next to the emergency spillway, permission of the State Dam Engineer will be needed; however, Sullivan said that in practical terms the spillway should almost never be a factor.

Another possible addition would be a bike park, similar to Boulder's. Access would be from connecting trails, or from Highway 93. Upon Sullivan's mention of the subject, Mayor Williams de-appointed himself to be the designee for the inaugural bike run at the park, since the Mayor of Breckenridge did that and broke his collarbone. Williams suggested Marriott be the person to do that. Marriott had some practical design suggestions, which would incorporate steep vertical slopes to add to the fun. He pointed out that a public objection to the bike park would be crowds and dust, but by moving the bike park to a different, hillier area, it would not only be more exciting to use, but farther from neighboring homes. Councilmember Dyer suggested two bike areas, one with vertical challenges for advanced riders, and one with more of a bunny slope idea for those less adventurous.

Bird's Nest Disc Golf, partially overlapping the dog park, could be changed to a membership golf park, to allow for better maintenance and improvements.

The Arvada Modelers will need to relocate if the Jefferson Parkway is built. They need adequate flying space as well as some distance from the homes in the area, although comments noted that they are good neighbors and an asset to the community. Sullivan said that the modelers have to keep their planes in sight at all times, so they fly their planes to the north to avoid losing them into the glare of the sun; optimal locations of runways would need to allow for that.

Some other changes might include a police training facility, regional and local trail connections, and improvements to the West Woods Golf Course.

Arvada's police officers, along with many others from around the entire metro area, are currently trained at the Combined Regional Training Academy in Lakewood. A facility at the Blunn site could reside next to two shooting ranges: one for the police, and one for the public. Of all the ideas floated, this is probably the most controversial, with noise from gunfire and from vehicle training topping the list of citizen objections. However, Sullivan said that a 2004 study showed significant citizen support for a shooting range here. Councilmember Bob Fifer noted that the issue of who would be managing the public range would be an important factor.

Staff is recommending further study before conditional land approval for either the training facility or a shooting range. Arguments supporting the facility include the fact that there is currently no full-service facility offering, for example high-speed chase vehicle training, firearms, and classroom training at the same site, so officers must travel a great deal to receive that specialized training. If built, Arvada's training academy could include all the various kinds of specialized courses and could offer those to other jurisdictions as well. In response to fears of noise problems, the City has noted that the facility would be located a mile from existing neighborhoods, and that noise mitigation would be taken into account in the design phase.

Councilmember Bob Dyer said that the land could remain open space, for now, and that funding for the police facility and shooting ranges still has not been identified. Mayor Marc Williams agreed, saying this will be a topic for further discussion, as well as study of the possible benefits and negative impacts. City Manager Mark Deven said that, right now, there are no funds either identified or projected for such a venture, and that we have a "long way to go" before anything would happen on that.

A majority of citizen comments received recently support increasing trail connectivity with other trail systems, parks, and open space surrounding the area. Sullivan pointed out that there are far more east-west oriented trails than those which go from north to south.

If the West Woods clubhouse and parking are expanded, two holes might need to be relocated. A conflict arises because of Tucker Lake, to the north, having trails and wildlife. Comments oppose incorporating Tucker Lake into the golf course. Mayor Williams reminded Sullivan that it's premature to say if West Woods will be expanding or not. Gordon Reusink, Director of Parks, Golf, and Hospitality, said that many of the possible designs for the expansion would include relocating and modifying part of the course.

Further study, as well as funding, will be needed for most of these changes. For now, citizen input is being taken into consideration, and there is still plenty of time to make your opinions heard.

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#### West Woods Clubhouse Design Update:

Following public input on the clubhouse, these objectives were identified:

It should reflect the activity levels associated with a 27-hole golf course; the new restaurant should be open to golfers and the public; there should be a tournament area; banquet facilities should be included for non-golf related uses; and any course changes should result in an equal or better design than that which currently is in place.

The consultants recommend kitchen and bar expansion, dining area for 150 people, patio dining space for 80 people, concessions area, outdoor wedding/event site for 250 or 300 people, tournament facilities, and improved landscaping and traffic flow.

Mayor Williams stressed that no decisions would be made at this workshop. He also promised to ask for a show of hands to indicate preferences for the various options.

Presenters at this workshop were Z Design Group's Jeff Fossum, Rick Phelps of Phelps-Atkinson Golf Course Design, and Peter Elzi of THK.

Elzi began by an overview of the current market demand for golf. He said that, while demand is expected to grow over the next decade, the golf market is very competitive due to overbuilding of golf courses. The Arvada area, he said, has one more golf course than is needed. West Woods has about 14% of the market, on par with other courses in the area; with the right improvements, Elzi said that could grow to 17%. Projections have been made using the assumption that the Applewood Golf Course stays open. The anticipated increase in Arvada's population, along with the expected demographics that increase should include, cause Elzi to be optimistic as long as the economy remains strong.

Elzi presented the following options:

Option A: No relocation of golf holes, keep clubhouse in existing site, expand the driving range, replace/improve putting green, add practice area, increase parking to 210 spaces, add small short game area, expand kitchen and cart storage areas, add outdoor covered area, add super-user lounge and staff/support area. Councilmember Dyer offered a suggestion to add 30 or 40 parking spaces where the parking lot drops off to the west, by adding a deck over the low area. He said this wouldn't impact neighbors' views because the deck would be even with where the east end of the lot is now. Elzi said that hadn't been studied, but could be an option.

Option B: Keep building about the same as in Option A, increase parking to 240 spaces, with a possible overflow parking lot to the south, allow for later addition of banquet facilities, expand driving range, add short game practice area, two putting greens, and an event lawn which could be used for junior golf. Councilmember John Marriott asked if the footprint would be doubling or if the plans would include an upper level; Elzi said an upper level was found not to be efficient.

Option C: Banquet facility for 150, increase parking to about 300 spaces, expand facility to 27,000 square feet, otherwise similar to Option B. Possible tournament porch on roof of banquet room, which would capture views.

Option D: Similar to Option C, except with a larger capacity and an added meeting/board room for about 20 to 25 people.

Option E: Completely new facility, located separately and could keep existing facility open during construction. Would include meeting room, 250-seat banquet room, mountain views.

Rick Phelps, who designed the Silo 9 course, addressed relocation of golf holes and what the new course might look like. He said any changes would result in "dramatic improvement to the two holes that would be going away." There was detailed discussion. Many of us who don't play golf have a hard time watching it on TV; detailed discussion of placement of golf holes falls somewhere below televised golf in excitement factor, so that discussion has been left out of these notes. The workshop was, however, televised, which for those who are interested combines the TV aspect with the extended-discussion aspect.

The consensus among councilmembers seemed to be a strong preference for options A and B. Mayor Williams said he doesn't see West Woods as the best place for new banquet facilities. Councilmember Fifer said he prefers A or B. Councilmember Marriott pointed out the likelihood that the Hilton, if built, would have banquet facilities, and that the Lamar Street Center already does. He said he also likes Silo 9 the way it is. He is in favor of making the facility so it can better serve golfers.

Councilmember Dyer likes option A, except for the parking, and would like the deck idea investigated. He said the course wasn't lavishly funded, in its early days, and the kitchen was really only meant to serve hamburgers/hot dogs and that sort of fare. Once the course had evolved to 27 holes, the need for improvements was very evident. Mayor Pro Tem McGoff said it seems to him the golf course should remain focused on its mission to provide the best options for golfers. He said he prefers option A. Councilmember Marks agreed, saying he thinks options C, D, and E are not viable. Councilmember Allard said he would like a recommendation from staff, but agrees with Mayor Williams' comments. Mayor Williams asked for a show of hands from the residents attending. Those preferring option A were in the majority, followed by doing nothing, and option B. There was no support for the other three options.

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#### Update, City Council Ten Year Financial Plan

Finance Director Bryan Archer and Assistant Finance Director Lisa Yagi presented the updates. Archer noted that the full budgeting process takes about half a year. On August 10 there will be a look at the update to the Capital Improvement Plan, and in September and October there will be further workshops and meetings.

Some current factors being looked at are increased market pressure on salaries, along with health insurance costs. Archer said the Human Resources Department is looking at ways to structure health care to reduce the "Cadillac Tax", which is scheduled to take effect in 2018 and is a non-deductible, 40% excise tax on employer-provided health benefits, and which, in the words of several councilmembers, forces the City to ding the taxpayers. For more information, see:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwood/2015/05/27/cut-health-coverage-or-send-obamacare-cadillac-tax-to-junkyard/>

Lisa Yagi said Arvada is doing well right now; sales tax is up, and building is active. Yagi said budgeting is based on a static amount of revenue generated from building use tax and permits, and if the revenue goes above that it is used for one-time items. She said this year that overage should be about \$4 million. Auto use tax has increased for seven straight years as well.

Many will be glad to know that the City's allocation for street maintenance has been raised back up to around \$6 million per year for all ten years of the plan. Yagi also noted that 20% of sales tax must be used for capital projects; so increases there provide more cash for those projects.

There was discussion about the increase in sales tax. Yagi said usually, when sales tax revenues have increased for four or five years, there is a decrease in the fifth or sixth year, or else a smaller increase. As of 2015, there have been six straight years of increases, so there could be a correction.

Councilmember Dyer said it mainly declines because of economic recessions, and that the Finance Department's projection of a decline in 2019 might be overly optimistic. He said he thinks 2017 or 2018 might be a more realistic expectation. He continued by saying that once the feds increase interest rates, he expects a recession to be likely in late 2017 or early 2018.

Bryan Archer presented additional information about revenues. Funding for the Arvada Center will now be level at \$1.6 million cash and \$2.2 million in in-kind contributions. Transition costs are expected, and the Center will be focusing on cost-saving measures, including a decrease in the number of shows offered.

Golf lost 21 days in May, because of rain, but the restaurant was very busy. Water usage is down to the tune of a \$5 million reduction in revenue from water usage. Tap fees are increasing, enough that it's realistic to hope that the Gross Reservoir Project can be cash funded.

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There were no additional staff updates, and the workshop concluded at 8:50.