

Arvada City Council Workshop, September 28, 2015

Notes taken by Susan Shirley

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

Public attendance at 6 p.m. was six people.

The topics of this meeting are construction of a street connecting Kipling Parkway with the Arvada Ridge area, and proposed revised budget for 2015-2016.

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Kipling Street Access:

Once upon a time, Kipling was directly connected to Independence Street and points north via Ridge Road. In the 1980s a parkway was constructed, and east and westbound rail and vehicle traffic cross on the Ridge Road overpass. But with transit oriented development (TOD), and the major expansion of Red Rocks Community College (RRCC), the City is looking hard at ways to improve access to that area.

Working with a consultant, planners have identified two preferred locations for a signalized intersection. Both are estimated to cost between \$1.25 and \$1.5 million. The northernmost option crosses Kipling just north of RRCC; the southern option, which is identified as the preferred of the two, crosses Kipling at around West 54th Avenue, culminating in a roundabout just west of Kipling. Of all the alternatives studied, the southern option needs the fewest modifications to the existing streets and topography on the west side of Kipling.

City Traffic Engineer Ben Waldman walked Council through the various options, showing why certain options were discarded and how the southern option was decided upon. Twenty-year traffic projections were used, and certain assumptions made about growth stemming from the TOD and the expansion of RRCC.

Among the factors affecting this decision are the expected traffic levels on Kipling, how that traffic would be affected by adding a light and an intersection, vertical and horizontal curves along Kipling, the fact that both the TOD area and RRCC are at a higher elevation than Kipling, and the goal of wanting access to both the TOD and RRCC, not just one or the other.

Waldman added that the \$1.25 million projected cost of the southern option does not include a deceleration lane on Kipling. He advised that the true cost will probably be closer to \$2 million, which includes about \$250,000 for the traffic signal.

The roundabout gives access to the loop road and the parking lot for RRCC, with the possibility of a later road accessing the TOD area; the TOD developer could possibly pay all or part of that construction. There was also brief discussion about a triangular parcel of land next to the Arvada Cemetery, which at some future date might be developed, and at that time the developer could pay to construct access to the intersection.

Waldman said that another benefit of the southern option is that it creates the smallest amount of disturbance to the topography, which was something RRCC was concerned about.

Next, Councilmember John Marriott broached the subject of not signaling the intersection now, but leaving that option to be added as needed later. He first wondered if northbound traffic on Kipling really would need a light for a left turn there. Waldman said that because of high traffic volume, there could at times be excessive delays, and the concern is that "vehicles would accept unacceptable gaps" in traffic to turn left. He said that, during peak hours, there could be traffic volumes about half of what we currently have at 55th and Wadsworth.

Marriott said there is already stacking of traffic on Kipling near I-70, but as you go north it opens up. He worried that a light might impede the flow, saying that with anything you do there's a tradeoff, but we don't want the bad to outweigh the good. Still thinking about an intersection without a light, Marriott asked if it would be possible to allow all but a left turn onto northbound Kipling. Waldman said that the traffic department had studied the problem and has determined that a light right there would make very little difference to the flow; he said that most cars approaching the intersection will have a green light. In response to a question by Councilmember Dyer, Waldman said that the traffic speed, plus horizontal and vertical curves, would most likely prevent CDOT from approving a full-movement intersection there without a light.

Councilmember Bob Fifer said it is important not to deflect traffic into residential areas. He said it makes sense to do the intersection right the first time, with today's dollars rather than tomorrow's. Fifer added that the majority of our traffic accidents involve left-hand turns.

Mayor Marc Williams asked if the traffic light would be controlled by photo sensors; Waldman responded that it will, and will be set to be green for Kipling unless someone needs to make a left-hand turn across traffic, or cars appear on the side street.

Councilmember Mark McGoff asked if any thought had been given to putting a roundabout at that intersection. Waldman said that would slow traffic down to about 20 mph, so not a good option.

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Budget:

If you're super-curious beyond what's posted here, the full and riveting set of numbers can be found here: http://www.arvadarecords.org/councilpacket/current_week/02.B.%20Presentation%20of%20Proposed%20Revised%202015-2016%20Operating%20and%20Capital%20Budget.pdf

The first reading of the budget is scheduled for October 5.

Some points of interest:

For the General Fund, there is \$456,000 in ongoing increases to various budget lines, plus \$2.5 million committed for one-time expenditures, with an additional \$6.5 million identified for other one-time expenditures.

The full amount proposed for all funds is \$195.6 million.

A Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator position is being added, at a yearly cost of about \$79,600.

A security contract for City Hall, City Hall Annex, and the Arvada Center is expected to total \$252,000 per year.

Increasing the salt-to-sand ratio for streets will add about \$100,000 a year.

Two additional Parks Worker positions adds \$117,744 yearly, but there is also a reduction for temporary positions in the amount of \$20,000 a year.

Four more police officers will be hired. This was planned for 2017 and 2019, so reworking the schedule on that increases the cost by \$756,628 over that whole period of time. There is also funding for three additional officers, to be paid by the COPS Federal grant; Bryan Archer said Arvada is the only city in Colorado to receive that grant.

Some large-ticket one-time items; some (in parentheses) have had funds committed; others have been identified as needs, and if resources are available can be approved by City Council:

- (Purchase of the Post Office building, \$1.2 million)
- (Contribution to Red Rocks Community College: \$1 million)
- Olde Town Transit Hub, about \$3.6 million
- AEDA, \$500,000
- (Arvada Center, digital art lab & studio \$150,000)
- Four police vehicles, \$208,000
- Public Works, security management items, \$600,000

There was discussion about the fact that Municipal Court now has a second courtroom as needed, and the expenses that entails.

Lisa Yagi went over the proposed ten-year plan. One area of concern to everyone is the so-called Cadillac Tax, which will be a 40% excise tax on employers who offer premium-level health benefits. Whatever is done to make the benefits not as good, of course penalizes the employees. If not somehow stopped, postponed, or modified, the tax is expected to begin in 2018. Meanwhile, the City is working closely with its benefits consultants to try to mitigate the problem without undue distress to Arvada employees. People can certainly also contact their senators and representatives to weigh in on the Cadillac tax.

Yagi said a projection has been built into the budget that sales tax revenue will drop by 2% in 2017. Formerly this was projected for 2019, but a more conservative approach has been adopted.

There was discussion about the tax increment funding for Arvada Police, and the possibility of having those funds cover a greater portion of the costs, allowing more General Fund dollars to go elsewhere. When the funding was passed, certain provisions were built into the question as it went to the voters; Councilmember Dyer said that it would be a good idea to have a look at what promises were made to the voters at the time, which was in 1993. Some of the surplus in those funds is being saved for a possible police substation at Candelas. Mayor Williams asked Acting City Manager Lorie Gillis if the \$252K annual security contract for the Arvada Center, City Hall and City Hall annex might be able to fit in those funds, and Gillis said she will check the language.

Councilmember McGoff wondered whether, if the Fed raises the interest rate, how much additional money could the City's reserve funds earn. Obviously that would depend on how much the rate was raised, and Councilmember Dyer warned that too much of an increase would have an adverse effect on the economy. Dyer believes a one-quarter percent increase is most likely, at first, but there could possibly be up to a one percent increase by the end of 2016. He said in that case the sales tax revenue projections would need to be revised significantly downward.

Councilmember Marriott said that it's good that business is doing well right now, but advised caution regarding spending, and not to neglect putting aside money for some of the very large capital needs. He said when business is good, that's a good time to be frugal.

The workshop was adjourned at 7:25.