

COUNCIL MINUTES

November 6, 1997

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Policy Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on November 6, 1997 at 4:03 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Wayne Brown
Vice Mayor Pat Gilbert
John Giles
Dennis Kavanaugh
Joan Payne
Wayne Pomeroy

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

C.K. Luster
Wayne Balmer
Cindy Barris
Neal Beets
Denise Bleyle
Dorothy Chimel
Jo Ferguson
Mike Hutchinson
Carl Geis
John Gendron
Lars Jarvie
Barbara Jones
Harry Kent
Wayne Korinek
Ron Krosting
Dorinda Larsen
Greg Marek
Jeff Martin
Frank Mizner

STAFF PRESENT (CONT.)

Ruth Anne Norris
Ellen Pence
Bryan Raines
Andrea Rasizer
Tom Remes
Becky Richardson
Jamie Warner
Mindy White
Paul Wilson

OTHERS PRESENT

Bob Grossfeld
Beverly Hart
Chris Moeser
Jerry Petrie
Alan Wulkan
Chris Zaharis
Others

(Due to the resignation of Councilmember Stapley, only six Councilmembers were present at the meeting.)

1. Hear and discuss reports concerning recent sales tax elections in neighboring cities.

Assistant City Manager Mike Hutchinson advised that sales tax (transit) elections were held recently in the cities of Tempe, Scottsdale, and Phoenix and that Alan Wulkan, and Bob Grossfeld, consultants for these elections, have been asked to provide input to Council.

Alan Wulkan, Chairman of the Board, Tempe Chamber of Commerce, and Vice President, Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade and Douglas, spoke concerning the City of Tempe election and a post-election survey, highlighting a) demographics of those who voted, b) reasons why individuals voted in the manner they did, and c) keys to success. Mr. Wulkan provided statistical data pertaining to political party affiliation, gender, and age of participants,

commenting that in general, the younger the population, the greater the support for the sales tax proposal.

Mr. Wulkan identified five primary reasons cited by individuals for voting in favor of the transit tax: a) is necessary, b) will reduce traffic, c) will reduce pollution, d) is important to Tempe's future, e) others will use it (transit) to improve the community. Mr. Wulkan stated that the principal reason for voting in opposition to the proposal was a) no more taxes, followed to a lesser extent by b) will not solve problems, c) not Valleywide, d) distrust of government, and e) people will not use it (transit).

Mr. Wulkan attributed the success of the Tempe election to the following factors: a) the partnership with the Tempe Chamber of Commerce and an emphasis on transit as a business community issue, b) partnerships with neighborhoods, c) a community-based service plan, d) a broad-based election steering committee, and e) control of the election, with an emphasis on winning. Mr. Wulkan stated that attempts were made to avoid mistakes made in other communities having similar elections.

Mr. Wulkan presented statistical data relative to the recent election in Scottsdale, noting that the majority of those voting were older in age and were opposed to the proposal. Mr. Wulkan advised that the younger population favored the tax but that not many participated in the election.

Mr. Wulkan reported that the primary reason individuals voted against the measure in Scottsdale was an opposition to taxes. Mr. Wulkan related additional comments expressed by survey respondents: a) tax is infinite in duration, b) weary of paying taxes, c) distrust of government, d) will not use buses, and e) ballot included issues other than transit (e.g., road component). Mr. Wulkan noted that the Tempe election focused on a single issue, while the Scottsdale election involved multiple issues.

Mr. Wulkan indicated that individuals voted in favor of the Scottsdale proposal for the following reasons: a) improved transit is necessary, b) more buses are needed, c) will assist those who cannot drive, d) will reduce pollution, and e) is appropriate action to take.

In response to a question from Councilmember Giles, Mr. Wulkan advised that survey results indicate support for transit-related issues such as bus pullouts because such measures assist in removing buses from mainstream traffic.

Discussion ensued pertaining to activities of individuals opposed to transit proposals and the inclusion of nontransit elements as ballot measures. Mr. Wulkan expressed the opinion that Dial-a-Ride improvements are not a primary consideration for most individuals at this time.

Vice Mayor Gilbert questioned appropriate marketing strategies to ensure a successful ballot measure. Mr. Wulkan suggested that rather than Council, a group or organization such as the Chamber of Commerce be made responsible for developing a coalition and plan.

Bob Grossfeld, Progressive Communications, Tempe, consultant for the recent City of Phoenix election, advised that the City of Phoenix measure was defeated by 124 votes. Mr. Grossfeld spoke concerning differences between market research, which indicates that transit is a popular

issue, and political research, which indicates that individuals distrust government and oppose increased taxes of unlimited duration. Mr. Grossfeld stated that elections such as those in Tempe, Scottsdale, and Phoenix are not typically viewed as transit or quality-of-life elections, but are considered tax elections.

Mr. Grossfeld commented concerning the utilization of early voting as a marketing strategy, reporting that the City of Phoenix ballot measure was decidedly approved through early voting but defeated at the polls on Election Day. Mr. Grossfeld noted publicity in favor of the proposal throughout the majority of the campaign process, with negative publicity emerging during the final weeks prior to the election. Mr. Grossfeld expressed the opinion that had the elections been all-mail elections, the ballot proposals would have been approved in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

Mr. Grossfeld encouraged the City prior to an election to determine and target individuals likely to participate and to consider strategies such as early voting. Mr. Grossfeld stated that the structure of a tax appears to have greater significance than the purpose. Mr. Grossfeld said that he has discovered minimal price sensitivity between 1/4¢, 1/2¢, and 3/4¢ tax proposals, advising that individuals in opposition to such measures tend to emphasize aggregate tax amounts.

Mr. Grossfeld noted economic justification for rejecting sunset provisions but stated that politically, electors favor a limited duration. Mr. Grossfeld reported that citizens generally support establishing an oversight committee. Mr. Grossfeld added that including multiple issues on a ballot may lead to increased distrust if individuals believe it is an attempt to obscure a primary focus. Mr. Grossfeld recommended preliminary discussions with those likely to oppose a proposed ballot measure.

Mr. Grossfeld spoke concerning the effective opposition by a minority to the City of Phoenix proposal. In response to questions from Councilmember Payne, Mr. Grossfeld noted the decrease in gross rating points during the last weeks prior to the election, the utilization of negative messaging, and the impact of a transit strike in San Francisco days prior to the election. Mr. Grossfeld commented that when individuals are not convinced relative to an issue, the tendency is to vote in opposition, particularly when monies are involved.

Brief discussion ensued pertaining to the role/impact of the media, the appropriateness of approaching transit as a regional issue, differences between bond and tax elections, the tendency of electors to vote in opposition when measures are perceived as complex, and the feasibility of conducting an election in Mesa in conjunction with the State's November 1998 General Election.

Mr. Grossfeld stated that the greater the participation, the more likely the success of a ballot proposal, but noted that local issues tend to be downplayed when outweighed by measures considered more significant; i.e., of statewide concern. Mr. Grossfeld indicated that a delay to November 1998 would allow greater opportunity to prepare for an election. Mr. Grossfeld spoke concerning the importance of unanimous Council support.

Mayor Brown expressed appreciation to Mr. Wulkan and Mr. Grossfeld for their attendance and comments.

2. Discuss and consider review of final subdivision plat approval process.

Mayor Brown stated that this item will be continued to a future Study Session.

3. Hear and discuss a. status report on residential development guidelines.

Community Development Manager Wayne Balmer provided background information pertaining to the purpose of the City's General Plan, development of draft residential development guidelines by the Planning and Zoning Board, and the implementation of design standards in surrounding communities. Mr. Balmer advised that following the tabling of the City's draft guidelines earlier this year, a trend has emerged within Mesa of development requests reflecting a preponderance of smaller lots (59% under 6,000 S.F. since January 1997 and 85% under 7,000 S.F. in October/November 1997). Mr. Balmer presented a report providing a breakdown of cases considered from January through October 1997 and the corresponding staff recommendation, Planning and Zoning Board vote, and Council decision.

Planning Director Frank Mizner related efforts undertaken/underway by surrounding communities to enhance the quality and character of housing inventory, particularly in relation to lot size. Mr. Mizner requested direction from Council as to possible reconsideration of the draft residential development guidelines, perhaps with an emphasis on density requirements.

Mayor Brown commented that the statistical data presented by staff may be misleading, noting that zoning cases have frequently undergone significant modifications from the initial proposal to final consideration by Council. Mayor Brown expressed concern relative to what appears to be a lack of voluntary compliance by developers with suggested development guidelines.

Councilmember Kavanaugh stated the opinion that without residential development guidelines, a preponderance for small-lot development in Mesa is likely to continue. Councilmember Kavanaugh suggested that consideration be given to adopting guidelines in an effort to benefit the community.

Councilmember Giles concurred with Councilmember Kavanaugh. Councilmember Giles commented that the adoption of guidelines would better define expectations for development approval. Councilmember Giles recommended an emphasis on density rather than architectural requirements.

Vice Mayor Gilbert noted the importance of issues such as setbacks to the appearance of a community. Vice Mayor Gilbert requested that information pertaining to net lot size be provided when zoning cases are presented in the future for Council consideration. Vice Mayor Gilbert commented concerning limited land available for new development and spoke in favor of guidelines to direct infill development. Vice Mayor Gilbert related his intention to scrutinize small-lot proposals if consensus pertaining to guidelines is not achieved in the near future.

Mr. Mizner noted diverse opinions among members of the Planning and Zoning Board and difficulties presented in defining/achieving consensus relative to development guidelines. Mr. Mizner commented that it is presently difficult to determine if cases comply with the tabled guidelines.

Councilmember Pomeroy suggested that staff and the Planning and Zoning Board review the draft residential development guidelines and forward a proposal to Council which focuses on lot size, density, etc.

Mr. Mizner clarified that the draft guidelines do not dictate features such as color and style but provide for an array of options for home buyers.

Mayor Brown questioned the effects of impact fees. Mayor Brown stated support for guidelines with an emphasis on density, noting, however, that increased lot size does not guarantee a better quality product.

Budget Director Jamie Warner indicated that the issue of impact fees is scheduled for discussion in December 1997.

Mr. Balmer recommended that staff and the Planning and Zoning Board review the draft residential development guidelines and prepare a proposal for Council consideration.

Councilmember Giles suggested that Council meet with the Planning and Zoning Board on an intermittent basis to discuss various issues.

Mayor Brown expressed appreciation to members of the Planning and Zoning Board present for their attendance at the meeting.

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Charles Luster stated that a Study Session is scheduled for Friday, November 7, 1997, at 7:30 a.m.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Policy Session adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

WAYNE BROWN, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Policy Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 6th day of November 1997. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 20th day of November 1997

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK