

COUNCIL MINUTES

February 9, 1996

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on February 9, 1996 at 7:30 A.M.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Willie Wong
Jerry Boyd
Pat Gilbert
T. Farrell Jensen
Dale Johnson
Jim Stapley

COUNCIL ABSENT

Joan Payne

STAFF PRESENT

C.K. Luster
Wayne Balmer
Neal Beets
Tanya Collins
John Gendron
Mike Hutchinson
Lars Jarvie
Barbara Jones
Sharon Joyce
Harry Kent
Wayne Korinek
Ron Krosting
Karen Kurtz
Jeff Martin
Frank Mizner
Keith Nath
Ellen Pence
Bryan Raines
Ross Renner
Paula Sloan Rivera
Gordon Sheffield
Doug Tessororf
Mindy White
Paul Wilson
Others

OTHERS PRESENT

Vince DiBella
Margie Frost
Louis Matta
Herb Osman
Sue Ringler
Tony Shumway
Others

(Mayor Wong excused Councilmember Payne from the meeting.)

1. Hear and give consideration to a final report on the Task Force for Homelessness.

Margie Frost, Chairman of the Task Force on Homelessness in Mesa, expressed appreciation to Mesa staff members Tanya Collins and Karen Kurtz and requested that those members of the Task Force in attendance stand and be recognized.

Ms. Frost referred to the Task Force's January 30, 1996 report and said that the members obtained a consensus on every issue discussed. Ms. Frost stated the opinion that homelessness in Mesa is an issue for the entire community to address and for which to take responsibility.

Ms. Frost advised that the phrase, Continuum of Care, utilized throughout the report, is critical in addressing homelessness in Mesa. Ms. Frost explained that the concept involves a series of interconnected, comprehensive policies, programs, and services designed to expedite a homeless person's journey to self-sufficiency (at the highest level of which they are capable) if they are willing. Ms. Frost added that the interconnectedness of agencies enables individuals who utilize the services to be tracked and provides for consequences for inappropriate behavior. Ms. Frost stated that this places responsibility, accountability, and acceptance of community standards of behavior on the homeless while providing accessibility to services and maintaining dignity. Ms. Frost added that a portion of the homeless are mentally and/or physical disabled and will always require care by the community. Ms. Frost said that continuum of care encourages those who choose not to take action to help themselves to move out of the community.

Sue Ringler, Vice Chairman of the Task Force on Homelessness in Mesa, stated that the report takes a holistic and comprehensive approach to homelessness and stressed the importance of accepting the document in its entirety. Ms. Ringler said that the Task Force discussed the current process for siting social service facilities in depth and heard testimony from many interested citizens. Ms. Ringler advised that the members concluded that social service facilities must be sited at some location in the community and that City government should offer guidance concerning preferred areas. Ms. Ringler added that residential and business neighbors of such facilities should be provided input earlier in the siting process concerning method of operation, safeguards, and other details.

Ms. Ringler expressed the opinion that the homeless issue should be evaluated on an ongoing basis and that the Task Force recommended establishing a permanent task force, such as the Gang Prevention Steering Committee, for this purpose. Ms. Ringler stated that education of the importance of continuum of care will be utilized to gain the cooperation and participation from all Mesa social service agencies. Ms. Ringler relayed the Task Force's recommendation to establish an East Valley year-round shelter with the assistance of the other East Valley communities, civic groups, businesses, and religious organizations.

Human Services Coordinator Karen Kurtz spoke concerning the recommended actions and estimated costs contained in the report. Ms. Kurtz stated that several of the recommendations were patterned after programs implemented in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Ms. Kurtz advised that Philadelphia established homeless outreach teams that attempt to place willing homeless individuals into the continuum of care while lawfully discouraging those who are unwilling to help themselves from remaining in the community. Ms. Kurtz added that dispatching outreach teams to non-violent incidents involving the homeless is significantly less expensive than when police personnel respond, and added that the teams are specially skilled and educated in directing the homeless to needed services.

Ms. Kurtz discussed methods utilized by other cities to respond to panhandling. Ms. Kurtz noted that Philadelphia has adopted an intense citizen education campaign encouraging residents to donate money to services that help the homeless rather than to the homeless.

themselves. Ms. Kurtz added that citizens are also encouraged to give panhandlers information cards outlining the location and availability of services.

Ms. Kurtz discussed the recommendation to establish a single-adult shelter in the East Valley and said that she visited a shelter in the City of Tucson that housed 110 single men. Ms. Kurtz stated that the facility was constructed on an access road to the freeway and that statistics indicate that crime in the area has decreased since the shelter opened. Ms. Kurtz added that the shelter obtained the City's contract for graffiti removal. Ms. Kurtz stressed the importance of proper management of social service facilities for successful integration into a community.

Ms. Kurtz said that the proposed database is a computer system that will alert connected agencies of inappropriate behavior displayed by individuals who utilize social services. Ms. Kurtz added that the system will serve to hold users of the services accountable for inappropriate actions and provide a mechanism to disallow those individuals from continuing to receive services in Mesa.

In response to a question from Councilmember Gilbert, Ms. Frost said that the community must be educated concerning the consequences of Mesa agencies choosing not to participate in the continuum of care. Ms. Frost stated the opinion that those providers who administer services to individuals outside the continuum of care may actually assist them in remaining homeless.

Discussion ensued concerning the 88 single-family homes around the Williams area that are designated for use by homeless providers and the selling of newspaper publications in Mesa by homeless individuals.

(Mayor Wong excused Councilmember Gilbert from the remainder of the meeting at 8:06 AM.)

Councilmember Stapley relayed his recent experience of spending 24 hours with homeless individuals and welcoming one into his home to reside for a period of time. Councilmember Stapley commended the Homeless Task Force for their report and stated that he concurs with the majority of the document. Councilmember Stapley expressed concern with the recommendation for a year-round homeless shelter and stated the opinion that such a facility may serve to attract homeless persons from outside the City to Mesa. Councilmember Stapley voiced concern that increasing the visibility and accessibility of services may cause other communities to refer their homeless individuals to Mesa.

Ms. Ringler noted that the recommendation to increase the visibility and accessibility of social service facilities was prompted by comments from Mesa's Police and Fire Departments indicating that when responding to situations involving the homeless, staff was often unaware of where to refer the individuals to obtain services. Ms. Ringler stated that if Mesa citizens are to be encouraged to help the homeless in ways other than giving them money during the holiday season, they should be informed of agencies that exist to which money can be donated as an alternative.

Councilmember Boyd commended staff and the Task Force for their efforts the past year and expressed the opinion that participation of all Mesa agencies is critical. Councilmember Boyd suggested that a list be comprise of all participating and non-participating agencies. In response to a question from Councilmember Boyd, Ms. Ringler stated that for service providers that

cannot obtain access to a computerized databank, outreach teams and the proposed Homeless Coordinator can routinely update the agencies concerning individuals who have abused the system and should not be entitled to continued services.

In response to questions from Mayor Wong, Special Programs Director Tanya Collins expressed the opinion that the Task Force's report assigns the City the role of catalyst, bringing together the resources to which the general population does not have access. Ms. Collins stated that Tucson's single male homeless shelter has been in operation for 10 years.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Jensen, seconded by Councilmember Boyd, to accept the final report on the Task Force on Homelessness in Mesa.

The Mayor declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

(At 9:00 A.M. the Mayor called for a recess and the meeting reconvened at 9:05 A.M.)

2. Further discussion and consideration on McKellips Road sound walls, landscaping, and medians.

Deputy City Engineer Keith Nath referred to a diagram of the McKellips Road widening project. Mr. Nath pointed out the intersection of Gilbert and McKellips and the location of raised medians that staff has proposed along Gilbert Road. Mr. Nath stated that the owners of two commercial shopping centers have requested that separations in the medians be positioned adjacent to the centers to provide left-turn access. Mr. Nath outlined the proposed landscape design of the medians and noted that raised medians are not proposed on McKellips Road.

Public Works Manager Harry Kent expressed the opinion that the design of the medians on Gilbert Road are critical because the City's subsequent road widening projects will incorporate the same concept.

City Manager Charles Luster noted that raised medians were the source of an intense dispute during the Country Club Drive widening project.

In response to questions from the Council, Traffic and Streets Director Ron Krosting estimated that future traffic volume on Gilbert Road will total 30,000 to 40,000 vehicles. Mr. Krosting expressed the opinion that citizens who reside on major streets view raised medians as a beautification enhancement while businesses view the medians as an obstruction to access into their businesses. Mr. Krosting noted that the majority of structures along the area of Gilbert Road under discussion are residential.

In response to a question from Councilmember Boyd, Mr. Nath listed the major north/south arterials in Mesa in which raised medians have been constructed. Councilmember Boyd noted that previous road widening projects involving major arterials did not incorporate raised medians and stressed the importance of consistency.

Vice Mayor Jensen expressed the opinion that it is appropriate to construct raised, landscaped medians in residential areas to enhance safety and beautification.

Mr. Nath referred to the project diagram and designated the location of potential sound walls. Mr. Nath stated that the solid block walls would be placed adjacent to residential areas and outlined several design schemes. Mr. Nath advised that sound wall construction will involve additional right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Luster expressed the opinion that should sound walls be included in the McKellips project, it will be difficult to avoid constructing sound walls on Gilbert Road when the road widening project is initiated.

In response to a question from Councilmember Boyd, Mr. Kent estimated the cost of the sound walls at \$1 million.

In response to a comment from Vice Mayor Jensen, Mr. Nath stated that in order to minimize disruption to the residents along McKellips Road, sound walls may be constructed prior to beginning the road widening project.

Discussion ensued concerning landscaping nodes along McKellips Road as illustrated on the project diagram. Mr. Nath stated that the landscaping is intended to enhance the visual nature of the project and to interrupt the linear effect of the sound wall. Mr. Nath added that maintenance of the landscaping nodes would be the City's responsibility. Mr. Kent noted that certain commercial uses may not be receptive to the landscaping nodes, citing decreased visibility of their businesses.

In response to a question from Councilmember Boyd, Mr. Nath stated that new street lights would be installed as part of the project. Mr. Nath added that the lights are included in the overall project cost.

Councilmember Boyd stated that he does not support initiating the road widening project at this time and suggested that construction be delayed until the Red Mountain Freeway has progressed to Gilbert Road. Councilmember Boyd expressed the opinion that an appropriate detour for traffic during construction does not exist. Councilmember Boyd added that if the project is initiated at this time, he would support the proposed landscaping nodes and sound wall but does not favor raised medians on Gilbert Road. Mayor Wong concurred with Councilmember Boyd's remarks.

Vice Mayor Jensen and Councilmembers Stapley and Johnson expressed support for proceeding with the project at this time. Vice Mayor Jensen stated opposition to the proposed landscaping nodes due to ongoing maintenance costs but indicated he would support raised medians on Gilbert Road and construction of a sound wall on McKellips. Councilmember Stapley voiced support for the landscaping nodes and sound wall proposed by staff but indicated that he opposes raised medians on Gilbert Road.

Mayor Wong requested that this item be placed on the agenda of the next Study Session in which the entire Council is anticipated to attend. Mr. Luster advised that the item will be placed on the agenda of the February 23, 1996 Study Session.

3. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

There were no reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Charles Luster advised that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, February 15, 1996, 8:00 A.M. - Joint Downtown Development/Redevelopment Committee

Tuesday, February 20, 1996, 5:30 P.M. - Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Luster advised that the February 16, 1996 Study Session has been cancelled

5. Prescheduled public opinion appearances. (Maximum of three speakers for five minutes per speaker)

There were no public opinion appearances prescheduled for this meeting.

6. Items from citizens present. (Maximum of three speakers for five minutes per speaker)

There were no items from citizens present.

7. Adjournment.

It was moved by Councilmember Stapley, seconded by Councilmember Johnson, that the meeting adjourn at 10:00 A.M.

The Mayor declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

WILLIE WONG, 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 Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 9th day of February, 1996. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this 23rd day of February 1996

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK