



COUNCIL MINUTES

June 25, 2009

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 June 25, 2009 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Dina Higgins
Dennis Kavanaugh
Dave Richins

COUNCIL ABSENT

Kyle Jones
Scott Somers

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Linda Crocker

Mayor Smith excused Vice Mayor Jones and Councilmember Somers from the entire meeting.

1. Review items on the agenda for the July 1, 2009 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflicts of interest: None

Items removed from the consent agenda: None

Items added to the consent agenda: None

2. Hear a presentation and discuss the First Amendment to the Nonexclusive, 2003 Cable Television Renewal License with COXCOM, Inc. (Related to Item 9b on the July 1, 2009 agenda.)

City Manager Christopher Brady reported that the First Amendment to the Nonexclusive, 2003 Cable Television Renewal License would increase the license fee (from 4.5% to 5.0%) that Cox Cable pays to the City of Mesa. He explained that such amount is the maximum allowable by law and coincides with what the cable television provider pays to the surrounding communities.

Mr. Brady also advised that the amendment document would no longer require Cox Cable to maintain the local Emergency Alert System (EAS) in Mesa, a provision that the City had requested be included in the original renewal license. He stated that Mesa currently utilizes a countrywide alert system and advised that the local EAS is no longer necessary. Mr. Brady

added that due to technological changes within Cox Cable's system, it was necessary for the cable system operator to eliminate such service.

Councilmember Kavanaugh noted that the manufacturer of the equipment that Cox uses to provide the local EAS no longer has the capacity to provide replacement equipment and said that from a technical standpoint, the platform can no longer be supported.

3. Hear a presentation and discuss the extension of the current franchise with Southwest Gas Corporation. (Related to Item 9c on the July 1, 2009 agenda.)

City Attorney Debbie Spinner informed the Council that the current franchise agreement between the City of Mesa and Southwest Gas Corporation is due to expire in August 2009. She explained that City staff and representatives of Southwest Gas have discussed renewal of the document, but have not reached final agreement on the content. Ms. Spinner stated that because the franchise agreement must be approved by Mesa voters, it is necessary to extend the existing contract until it can be replaced with a revised agreement, which would be placed on the ballot in 2010.

Mayor Smith commented that the franchise agreement allows Southwest Gas to extend its gas lines through the City's streets and right-of-ways in order to provide gas service to its Mesa customers.

In response to a question from Councilmember Kavanaugh, Ms. Spinner clarified that staff is endeavoring to place the franchise agreement on Mesa's September 2010 Council Election ballot. She also said that Southwest Gas would incur any costs associated with placing that item on the ballot.

Mayor Smith stated that Mesa's September 2010 Council Election would coincide with Maricopa County's Primary Election and noted that a City Runoff Election, if necessary, would be held in November.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that Mesa's Gas Utility provides gas service to various homes and businesses in Pinal County (Magma Gas system); that staff has performed assessment evaluations relative to the value of the Magma Gas system as compared to that of the Southwest Gas system in Mesa to determine the feasibility of Mesa and Southwest Gas "swapping" service areas; and that Southwest Gas has not expressed an interest in pursuing such an option at this time.

4. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on a proposal to establish a Development Advisory Board – Deleted.

Mayor Smith stated that this item was deleted from the agenda and would be presented at a future Study Session.

5. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on the Light Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Economic Development Department Director Bill Jabjiniak addressed the Council and introduced Economic Development Specialist Shea Joachim.

Mr. Jabjiniak displayed a PowerPoint presentation (A copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and reported that the Economic Development Department's role in the integration of the Main Street Light Rail Transit (LRT) alignment is to ensure that light rail is maximized to the fullest; to coordinate all of the downtown efforts; and to incorporate the Council's Strategic Initiatives (i.e., Regional Leadership and Economic Development) into the process. He also stated that it would be important for the City to take into consideration the efforts undertaken by Phoenix and Tempe with regard to light rail to ensure that its extension into downtown Mesa is a success.

Mr. Jabjiniak briefly reviewed the Council's Strategic Initiatives regarding Regional Leadership and Economic Development and how they relate to the integration of light rail in downtown Mesa.

Mr. Joachim highlighted various downtown planning efforts currently underway or expected to commence in the near future as follows:

- Downtown Visioning Exercise – The Downtown Mesa Association (DMA) is soliciting input/feedback from the downtown stakeholders concerning their long-term vision for the Town Center area.
- Downtown Activation – Additional focus/coordination of special events in the downtown.
- Downtown Development – Staff's efforts to update the City's Building Code by streamlining development review processes and facilitating redevelopment in the downtown.
- Transit Oriented Design and Form – As a component of the Zoning Code update, utilizing flexibility in design in order to encourage development in the downtown.
- Central Main Street Area Plan – Spearheaded by the Development and Sustainability Department, the Plan will focus on how to encourage development/redevelopment in the downtown area and balance existing uses with uses that are appropriate adjacent to the light rail alignment.
- Light Rail Integration.

Deputy Transportation Director Mike James explained that per Council direction, staff is in the process of developing a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, whose purpose would be to recommend design criteria for the Main Street LRT alignment in support of "big picture" economic strategies. He noted that staff is seeking input from the Committee concerning the following issues: 1.) A cohesive Main Street configuration; 2.) Pedestrian access; 3.) Station location and architecture; 4.) System infrastructure elements; and 5.) Aesthetic considerations.

Mr. James advised that it is anticipated that the Stakeholder Advisory Committee would meet between September 2009 and April 2010. He also spoke regarding a timeline for the environmental assessment and downtown integration (2009), preliminary engineering/final design (2010), and construction of the alignment (2013). Mr. James added that during the construction phase of the project, staff intends to solicit input from the community regarding the process.

Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator Jodi Sorrell reported that relative to the proposed structure of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, staff recommends the formation of one group that would address the overall issues for the entire length of the LRT alignment. She stated that because there may be issues specific to certain areas along the rail line, staff further

recommends that two subcommittees be formed: one to focus on the downtown area and a second group to address concerns west of Country Club Drive to Sycamore Drive. Ms. Sorrell added that the Council would make the final decisions regarding any Committee recommendations.

Discussion ensued relative to the composition of the 20-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee; that invitations to apply for membership to the Committee would be extended to a broad base of downtown stakeholders (i.e., downtown business and property owners, neighborhood representatives, the DMA, Mesa Chamber of Commerce, Mesa Convention and Visitor's Bureau, West Mesa Community Development Corporation, the Arts community); the proposed application timeline; that the applications would be utilized to identify the expertise/experience of the individuals; and that Mayor Smith would make recommendations, and the Council would approve, the appointment of various citizens to the Committee.

City Manager Christopher Brady commented that although it is essential that the Committee have strong representation from various downtown stakeholders, it is equally important that the City bring in individuals from outside the downtown area who have expertise with regard to light rail and familiarity with the success of similar projects in other communities.

Mr. James said that staff has been working to enlist the services of Tad Savanar, a nationally known urban designer, to facilitate the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. He explained that Mr. Savanar, who worked with METRO on the first 20 miles of the LRT alignment, has extensive experience with regard to the integration of small scale improvements and design elements that maximize the storefronts of businesses located along the rail lines.

Mr. Brady stated that the first phase in the design process for the Main Street LRT alignment is to enhance the pedestrian experience, encourage the integration of vehicles, buses and bicycles and be sensitive to the existing businesses in the area.

Mayor Smith concurred with staff's approach and commented that it is important that Mesa have a vision for the Main Street LRT alignment.

Mr. Savanar, who was present in the audience, addressed the Council and provided an extensive overview of his professional expertise and background. He reported that he has worked on more than ten fixed rail systems throughout the country. Mr. Savanar stated that he most recently developed the "Block by Block Program," which examines light rail alignment in 20-foot increments to assist business owners in improving their storefronts so that they are more attractive to customers and pedestrians. He also highlighted one of his current light rail projects in Portland, Oregon that extends through the community's retail, government and civic core.

Councilmember Finter expressed support for staff's recommendations and urged all of the City departments involved in this project to avoid any duplication of efforts. He also commented that in the past, consulting fees have been "a hot button" in the community and urged staff to be mindful of that fact as the LRT alignment project moves forward.

In response to a question from Councilmember Richins, Mr. Savanar stated that in his professional opinion, eight months would be a sufficient period of time for the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to accomplish all of its objectives.

Councilmember Richins encouraged staff to provide the Committee additional time to meet if the members deemed it necessary. He also inquired whether it might be counterproductive for the Committee to be divided into two subcommittees since the design criteria for west of Country Club Drive and downtown should be integrated as much as possible.

Mr. James reiterated that the Committee would address the overall design issues, but said that staff would like the flexibility to utilize the subcommittees if specific issues arise that warrant their attention.

In response to a question from Councilmember Kavanaugh, Mr. Savanar stated that Portland, Oregon, San Jose, California and Dallas, Texas are examples of communities that have successfully integrated economic development with light rail.

Mayor Smith thanked everyone for the presentation.

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

Councilmember Higgins introduced Mike Oler, a Councilmember from Fairfield, Ohio, who owns a home in her district. She stated that she met Mr. Oler at a National League of Cities event and invited him to attend a Council meeting when he visited Mesa.

7. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, June 30, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – Public Safety Committee meeting

Wednesday, July 1, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – Groundbreaking Ceremony for Fire Station #218

Wednesday, July 1, 2009, TBA – Study Session

Wednesday, July 1, 2009, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Wednesday, July 8, 2009, TBA – Study Session

Wednesday, July 8, 2009, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

8. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 8:21 a.m.

SCOTT SMITH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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 25th day of June, 2009. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

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