



COUNCIL MINUTES

April 26, 2012

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Special Council Meeting in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on April 26, 2012 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Christopher Glover
Dina Higgins
Dennis Kavanaugh
Dave Richins
Scott Somers

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Linda Crocker

(Councilmember Richins arrived at the meeting at 7:33 a.m.)

1. Approving and authorizing the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Westminster College for the lease of a City-owned building located at 245 West 2nd Street. (District 4)

Economic Development Department Director Bill Jabjiniak introduced Dr. George B. Forsythe, President of Westminster College. He stated that Westminster College, which is located in Fulton, Missouri, intends to bring a branch campus to downtown Mesa beginning the fall semester of 2013. Mr. Jabjiniak noted that Westminster College will offer programs in International Business, Environmental Studies and Transnational Studies, with minor programs in pre-med and pre-law. He added that Westminster College will be the first occupant of the Mesa Center for Higher Education.

Dr. Forsythe introduced Dr. Carolyn Perry, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, and Kent Mueller, a Paradise Valley resident, a Westminster alumnus, and a member of the Westminster Board of Trustees.

Dr. Forsythe thanked the City of Mesa for its hospitality and stated that he looked forward to the partnership between Westminster College and the City to establish a campus presence in downtown Mesa. He remarked that Westminster College was attracted to this opportunity because of the Council's vision to use higher education as a means by which to engage and enhance the downtown area. Dr. Forsythe added that such a vision could potentially transform higher education as it is known to exist today.

Dr. Forsythe provided a brief historical overview of Westminster College, which was founded in 1851 as a four-year liberal arts college, and was the site of Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946. He pointed out that students from 27 states and 70 countries attend Westminster College and said that the college's mission is to prepare leaders of character for service in the global community. Dr. Forsythe stated that Westminster College intends to bring that same vision to the City of Mesa. He added that Westminster's curriculum, which will be offered in a small classroom setting, is designed to prepare students to become critical thinkers and life-long learners.

Councilmember Kavanaugh noted that he was from Missouri and very familiar with Westminster College's stellar reputation. He acknowledged Westminster's mission of developing leaders in various disciplines which, in his opinion, is critical to the health of a community. Councilmember Kavanaugh also stated that he respected the idea of students of all ages having the choice to attend classes in a smaller and more intimate setting.

Councilmember Richins commented that Westminster College's presence in the downtown area was "exciting for Mesa's future" and said that he looked forward to a long-term partnership between the City and Westminster.

Mayor Smith stated that not only was it the Council's vision to bring colleges/universities to downtown Mesa, but also for those institutions to recognize that Mesa has a built-in base of assets, such as the Mesa Arts Center (MAC), libraries and the future completion of light rail. He noted that such assets would enhance and enrich the students' college experience.

Vice Mayor Somers pointed out that a university is really a collection of colleges and stated that he envisions downtown Mesa, with the addition of Benedictine University, Westminster College and hopefully other higher education institutions, as "a discontinuous campus," with many college facilities spread throughout the area and also taking advantage of the MAC, light rail and other City-owned facilities.

Vice Mayor Somers suggested that in the future, it would be important for staff and the Council to consider how the City should adapt City assets, such as the MAC, to meet the needs of the colleges and universities that will locate to the downtown area. He also stressed the importance of the City working to ensure that the higher education initiative in downtown Mesa succeeds.

Mayor Smith thanked Dr. Forsythe for his presentation.

It was moved by Councilmember Glover, seconded by Vice Mayor Somers, to approve and authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Westminster College for the lease of a City-owned building located at 245 West 2nd Street.

Carried unanimously.

(Note: No Resolution was presented for Council consideration.)

2. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Special Council Meeting adjourned at 7:44 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 Special Council Meeting of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona held on the 26th day of April, 2012. 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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