



COUNCIL MINUTES

September 12, 2013

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 September 12, 2013 at 8:17 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Christopher Glover
Dennis Kavanaugh
David Luna
Dave Richins

COUNCIL ABSENT

Scott Somers

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Dee Ann Mickelsen

(Mayor Smith excused Councilmember Somers from the entire meeting.)

1. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on Transit Advertising.

Transit Services Director Jodi Sorrell displayed a PowerPoint presentation (**See Attachment 1**) and reported that several years ago, staff approached the Council with regard to implementing a Transit Advertising Program. She stated that the purpose of the program was to build and maintain new bus shelters along existing bus routes.

Ms. Sorrell explained that during the last year, staff has met with various entities throughout the Valley that have created Transit Advertising Programs and also solicited input from stakeholders in this regard.

Ms. Sorrell advised that as a result of such efforts, it was staff's recommendation that the City issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek out a vendor to manage a Transit Advertising Program in Mesa. She noted that the City would award a five-year contract and briefly highlighted the responsibilities of the contractor. (See Page 3 of Attachment 1) She added that at the end of the five years, the kiosks would become the City's property.

Ms. Sorrell displayed photographs illustrating examples of advertising kiosks at bus stops in various communities. (See Page 4 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Sorrell, in addition, reviewed the criteria for the bus stops that would not be considered as appropriate sites for advertising kiosks. (See Page 5 of Attachment 1)

Councilmember Richins remarked that staff's presentation was somewhat confusing in that they took a negative approach with respect to where the kiosks would not be located.

In response to a question from Councilmember Richins, Ms. Sorrell verified that the advertising kiosks would be located in commercial areas and at bus stops that have a shelter or a bench. She noted that the kiosks would not be located at stops that only have a pole with a bus sign attached to it.

Ms. Sorrell further explained that the program would place an advertising kiosk at a bus stop, for instance, at University and Country Club Drives and said that the revenue generated from that kiosk would fund a new shelter at a stop with a single pole as previously mentioned.

City Manager Christopher Brady indicated that if the City were able to fund a bench or shelter at one location, the single-pole site might then become eligible for an advertising kiosk. He also noted that “the hope” of the program would be to expand the number of bus shelters throughout the community.

Councilmember Richins commented that rather than establishing a program on hope, he would prefer that the program was successful in providing more seating, garbage cans and shade at the City’s bus stops. He stated that “transit advertising works” and encouraged staff to seek out innovative design standards for the kiosks, benches and shade. He also suggested that there were some exciting opportunities for public/private partnerships for a Transit Advertising Program and added that he did not want to see Mesa “locked in a box” with respect to the approach it takes in this regard.

In response to comments from Councilmember Richins, Ms. Sorrell explained that Valley METRO has implemented its “NextRide” electronic service, which provides riders with quick access, via their Smartphone or the Internet, to the next bus/train schedule information.

Mayor Smith remarked that this presentation seems “eerily like discussions and debates that happened ten years ago” and stated that perhaps the City “might be stuck in the past.” He indicated that in recent years, the public has accepted the concept of advertising at bus shelters and suggested that it could be accomplished in a tasteful manner that does not diminish the surrounding area.

Mayor Smith, in addition, voiced concern that the City was going back to “what it believed were the restraints a decade ago and applying those today as opposed to looking at opportunities.” He questioned, for example, what would be offensive about placing an advertising kiosk on a collector street, such as Adobe, if it is done in an unobtrusive manner.

Councilmember Richins commented that he would like to see a more market-driven approach with respect to this issue as opposed to merely limiting the sites to commercial areas.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that staff’s rationale for not considering a bus stop located on a collector street is based on input from previous City Councils when the issue of transit advertising was first considered; that such a concept is no longer new; and that today, light rail trains and buses are wrapped with advertisements and appear as “traveling billboards.”

Mayor Smith acknowledged staff’s efforts and hard work, but concurred with Councilmember Richins’ comments that the City should open up this process in an effort to solicit creative and innovative concepts from a variety of entities. He also said that such a process could serve as

an opportunity not only to fund new bus stops, but also to improve existing stops. He added that he would encourage staff to work with fewer restrictions rather than more.

Councilmember Richins suggested that it might be appropriate for staff to make certain technical changes to the Zoning Code and Sign Ordinance in order for the Council to “empower” this process. He stated that changes should be made in such a manner to provide the City the flexibility to implement a Transit Advertising Program anywhere in Mesa.

Zoning/Civil Hearing Administrator Gordon Sheffield addressed the Council and reported that currently, the Zoning Ordinance prohibits any off-site signs. He explained that it would be necessary to create an exception to the Code and pointed out that a Ninth Circuit Court case involving the City of Los Angeles established a legal precedence in this regard. He indicated that the City of Los Angeles had a similar situation regarding the prohibition of off-site signs and created an exception specific to transit signs.

Mr. Sheffield further advised that last fall, staff prepared and presented a draft Sign Ordinance to the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Board, which included explicit provisions regarding the size and placement of signs. He pointed out that although the document is not as restrictive as what has been discussed today, it does limit when an advertising sign can be illuminated.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the draft Sign Ordinance states that an advertising sign could be illuminated in commercial areas, but not in residential neighborhoods; that such a provision would address the issue of a mid-block bus stop that backs up to a home or arterial street to prevent additional illumination from “bleeding over” into a resident’s backyard; and that the document, as currently written, would authorize the illumination of the shelter since it could be shielded and any glow that is emitted could be controlled.

Councilmember Richins stated that he would be more interested in staff developing a standard for brightness as opposed to worrying about the issue of additional illumination. He commented that if a person were standing in a bus shelter at night that was illuminated either from a sign or the shelter itself, that individual would feel much safer as opposed to standing in a dark space.

Mr. Brady suggested that staff open up the RFP process and revisit the issue with the Council at a future date.

Councilmember Richins reiterated that he would encourage the businesses that respond to the RFP to offer creative and innovative design ideas for the bus shelters.

Mayor Smith noted that if the City can increase the number of “tastefully done” bus stops, benches and kiosks in Mesa and be absolved of the responsibility of maintaining those structures, he would encourage staff to explore those types of opportunities.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the proposed Sign Ordinance exception relative to design standards (See Page 9 of Attachment 1); that the proposed maximum sign copy is somewhat larger than what is being used in Phoenix and Chandler; and that staff did not want the sign to overwhelm a residential area and yet would be large enough to be seen in a commercial area without blocking the visibility back into the area.

Mayor Smith remarked that if it were staff's intent to maximize the City's investment in a Transit Advertising Program, he suggested that it might be appropriate to include provisions for two different sign sizes in the draft Sign Ordinance. He cited, for instance, that a large sign on Alma School Road or Southern Avenue would be much less intrusive to some driving by as compared to on a collector street, such as Adobe, where a sign of a similar size would not be necessary.

Mr. Sheffield clarified that the maximum size of a sign for multi-family projects or an office project is eight feet high and 32 square feet, even on an arterial street.

Mayor Smith commented that Phoenix and Chandler have had their Transit Advertising Programs for quite some time and stated that perhaps Mesa could learn from their successes and mistakes in this regard. He also noted that as part of the RFP process, the industry would offer their insights with respect to what they have done in other communities concerning transit advertising.

Ms. Sorrell assured the Council that staff spoke with representatives from Phoenix, as well as industry representatives. She added that the sign guidelines are typical of what is used across the country.

Ms. Sorrell briefly reviewed the proposed advertising content restrictions (See Page 10 of Attachment 1) and also highlighted the next steps in the process. (See Page 11 of Attachment 1)

Mayor Smith commented that the reality is that the RFP may come back and staff may "tweak" the Sign Ordinance based upon the input that the City receives in the RFP.

Mr. Brady indicated that staff will include language in the RFP that would not restrict the businesses from complying with the current ordinance, but rather encourage them to propose some creative ideas and concepts.

Mr. Sheffield clarified that staff will delay the introduction of the ordinance until the City obtains the responses from the RFP.

Ms. Sorrell stated that staff would work to issue the RFP by the end of this month and bring back the proposals to the Council early next year.

Mayor Smith thanked everyone for the presentation.

2. Information pertaining to the current Job Order Contracting projects.

The Council had no questions or concerns with respect to this item.

3. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of various boards and committees.

3-a. Economic Development Advisory Board meeting held August 6, 2013.

It was moved by Councilmember Kavanaugh, seconded by Councilmember Glover, that receipt of the above-listed minutes be acknowledged.

Mayor Smith declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

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

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

5. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

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

Friday, September 13, 2013, 6:00 p.m. – Mesa Arts Center Season Opening “Remix Remaster”

Thursday, September 19, 2013, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

SCOTT SMITH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, 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 12th day of September, 2013. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

pag
(attachment – 1)

Transit Advertising

September 12, 2013

Objective

Build and maintain
new bus shelters
along existing bus routes.

Recommended Approach

- Issue Request for Proposals
- Award a 5 year contract
- The Contractor shall:
 - Fund, install and maintain new shelters and advertising kiosks
 - Be responsible for the advertising content

Examples of Stops with Advertising



Criteria for Bus Stops

- Stops will not be considered if they are located in an area that meets this criteria:
 - Area is zoned residential
 - Existing bus stop does not have a shelter or bench
 - Stop has an existing advertising restricted easement
 - Stop is located on a local, collector or private road

Bus Stops Meeting Criteria

- 217 bus stops are eligible for the program:
 - 105 Shelters
 - 82 stops with a bench and trash can
 - 30 stops with a bench only

Sign Ordinance

- Current sign ordinance prohibits transit advertisement.
- Planning & Zoning Board recommended that City Council approve an exception to the sign ordinance.
- Scheduled for City Council approval in October, 2013.

Proposed Ordinance Exception

- Locations
 - Adjacent to arterial streets
 - Adjacent to transit stops with shelters
 - Transit-related street benches with trash can
 - Light rail stations
 - Bike share stations
 - No direct illumination of shelter signs next to residential districts
 - Safety illumination of shelter allowed
 - Placement restricted to right-of-way or public easement

Proposed Ordinance Exception

- Design Standards
 - Maximum sign copy: 8 feet high, 40 square feet
 - Maximum width to height ratio of copy: 2:1
 - Sign copy remains within frame
 - Detached signs within 10 feet of shelters or benches
 - One sign per location
 - Existing definition of “sign area” allows 2-sided signs (3 sided Kiosk are allowed if the 3rd side is for transit information only)
 - “Harmonious” with design of shelter
 - Includes materials and colors
- Electronic message panels prohibited

Advertising Content Restrictions

- We will follow the same guidelines used by the City of Phoenix and Valley Metro
- The right to reject any potentially objectionable advertising such as sexually explicit material or material advertising alcohol.
- The subject matter of all shelter and transit furniture advertising shall be limited to speech or graphic images which propose a commercial transaction.

Next Steps

- September, 2013 Approve Exception to Sign Ordinance
- Issue Request for Proposal
- October, 2013 Ordinance Consideration
- January, 2014 Award Contract
- February, 2014 Begin Advertising Program
- June, 2014 First Advertising Placement

Questions