

COUNCIL MINUTES

November 8, 2001

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 November 8, 2001 at 7:45 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Hawker
Jim Davidson
Bill Jaffa
Dennis Kavanaugh
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

1. Hear an update on plans for A Merry Main Street event on November 30, 2001.

Redevelopment Planner Tony Felice and Recreation Coordinator Kelly O'Neill addressed the Council regarding this agenda item. Mr. Felice reported that the Merry Main Street event will take place in downtown Mesa from 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on November 30, 2001. Mr. Felice introduced "Flurry" and noted that Flurry will be one of the attractions on hand to entertain children at the event.

A commercial which will air on Channel 11 promoting the event was viewed in the Council Chambers.

Ms. O'Neill reported that this year's event has been extended by an hour, that an additional stage at the future location of the Mesa Arts Center has been added, that the Mesa Symphony will perform on the new stage; that a window decorating contest for merchants has been added to the event; and that a fireworks display has been added which will occur at approximately 9:25 p.m. at the future location of the Mesa Arts Center. She also reported that the event will continue to include 50 tons of snow, the trolleys, an extended visit from Santa, free crafts for kids and non-stop entertainment.

Mr. Felice reported that a Gingerbread House contest has also been added this year; that additional food booths and activity booths for children have been added and that the event will include first-class entertainment at the various stages.

In response to a question from Councilmember Pomeroy regarding food booths, Mr. Felice reported that food booths have been increased from 12 to approximately 18, with a variety of foods and pricing. He added that additional downtown restaurants will remain open for the event.

Mayor Hawker thanked staff for the presentation.

2. Discuss and consider comments from the Economic Development Advisory Board regarding *The New Economy: Making Public Policy Choices and the Mesa Community Profile Report.*

Gary Smith, Chairman of the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB), addressed the Council and introduced numerous EDAB members who were present in the audience. Mr. Smith stated that over the past few years EDAB has had difficulties determining its role and how to effectively communicate with the Council. He further stated that EDAB members have elected to assume an educational type of role and provide Councilmembers with materials to assist them in rendering economic development decisions. Mr. Smith referred to a report/comments from the EDAB entitled *The New Economy: Making Public Policy Choices*, which was provided to the Councilmembers and he noted that the report was fashioned after the eight characteristics of the New Economy, as outlined in the Morrison Institute publication. He noted that although EDAB members are not completely satisfied with the report/comments regarding policy choices, the members are committed to continuing their efforts in this regard.

Mr. Smith commented on EDAB's oversight role with the Joint Master Planning Committee. He said that EDAB members believe there should be a guiding vision to assist the Council in rendering development related decisions. He added the opinion that neither the report/comments from the EDAB nor the updated General Plan provide a guiding vision. He commented on problems associated with development decisions that do not consider an overall vision for an area, problems associated with access to City parks and libraries; and the importance of pursuing a vision for the Williams Gateway Airport/General Motors area as a destination area and not just an employment area.

Councilmember Jaffa stated that he concurs with many of the policy comments from EDAB, particularly comments regarding opportunities associated with the City's water farm. He also commented on the possibility of utilizing key members of the local business community to attract complimentary businesses to the community.

Vice Mayor Davidson voiced appreciation for the efforts of EDAB members to define methods of utilizing the Morrison Institute's Public Policy Guidelines in Mesa, and for their innovative look into designing neighborhoods and businesses that encourage a pedestrian environment. He stated the opinion that the housing and transportation elements of the General Plan do provide innovative vision and he voiced general opposition to the trend toward a regional approach to issues.

Discussion ensued regarding a recent presentation at a Megacorp meeting by Dr. Florida and theories relative to achieving a balance of talent, technology and tolerance.

Councilmember Kavanaugh voiced appreciation to EDAB members for their service to the City and stated the opinion that EDAB has undergone a strong transformation into a group which

exemplifies the importance of advisory boards. He commended the Board for their report/comments.

Councilmember Walters also voiced appreciation to EDAB and commented on problems associated with identifying, articulating and implementing a single vision for the City. She requested that EDAB consider defining Mesa's "hub" and what makes Mesa unique, as part of its ongoing efforts.

Mr. Smith discussed the importance of Mesa capitalizing on its size, the City's diverse people assets and partnerships with other Valley communities and organizations; and also the importance of defining the role that Mesa plays in the greater community.

Councilmember Whalen thanked Mr. Smith and EDAB members for their dedication to the community and stated the opinion that the Council would benefit from joint meetings with EDAB and the Joint Master Planning Committee.

Mayor Hawker also voiced appreciation to EDAB members for their work. He stated the opinion that the Council does have a vision for the City. He commented on Mesa's growth process and the fact that the current Council has participated in significant evaluation of the future of Mesa, the City's jobs-to-housing ratio and its status at build-out. He also stated opinions regarding tremendous opportunities that exist in the downtown, Falcon Field and Williams Gateway Airport areas.

Economic Development Director Dick Mulligan stated that the report from EDAB was generated entirely by the Board without the assistance of staff and he commended board members for their efforts.

3. Hear a status report on improvements to the building permit and land development process.

Building Safety Director Crystal Pearl addressed the Council regarding this agenda item and said that staff's presentation would include updates on customer service issues, building permit and land development process improvements, and fees related to plans review and building permits.

Deputy Building Safety Director Bill Bessey explained why most building plans are required to be prepared, signed and sealed by registrants such as licensed architects and engineers and commented on State law mandates and criteria which govern what types of projects must be signed and sealed. He noted that single-family residences are not required by State law to be prepared by registrants and said that the primary responsibility of the Building Safety Division is to ensure that building plans are correctly prepared by qualified professionals.

Discussion ensued regarding the process of reviewing remodeling projects designed by homeowners; and resources available in the Building Safety Division for prospective homeowners to research the history of a property including permits, improvements and violations.

Ms. Pearl commented on numerous changes made within the division to improve the resubmittal process and turnaround times. She stated that the division presently has a 24 working-day turnaround time for commercial projects and a 5-8 working-day turnaround time for

residential projects. She also commented on additional efforts of the division to address customer concerns including monthly Public Advisory Workshops conducted by the division and workshops at the Home Depot.

Development Services Manager Jack Friedline commented on the status of implementing automation improvements previously approved by the Council and explained historical difficulties associated with automating the building permit process. He stated that due to a recently formed regional committee, which is evaluating automated permitting, and Ms. Pearl's experience in this area, staff anticipates that the upcoming transition to an automated system will be successful.

Ms. Pearl commented on the recent remodeling within the division offices to improve customer service, the recent initiation of a newsletter designed to inform customers of new processes and improvements in the division, and recent implementation of an interactive voice response system that automates requests for inspections. She reported that additional planned improvements include implementing an over-the-counter review process to improve turnaround times and the resubmittal process, and on-line permit inspection status reporting and processing.

Ms. Pearl reported that a major planned process improvement is to collect fees for plans review at the beginning of the process. She explained that historically, fees for plans review are included with permitting fees and collected when plans are retrieved by submitters and permits issued. She reported that the Uniform Building Code adopted by the City allows the City to collect 65% of the permit fee at the beginning of the process. She further reported that approximately 10% of plans reviewed by the division are never retrieved and paid by submitters. She added that other Valley communities charge plans review fees (65% of the permit fee) at the beginning of the process.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that an in-depth presentation would be provided to the Council in the near future concerning this significant process change and he stated the opinion that it is important to enact this change to ensure that City resources are not wasted by submitters of speculative plans.

In response to a question from Councilmember Jaffa, Planning Director Frank Mizner reported that all zoning related fees are charged at the beginning of the process.

Mayor Hawker, Vice Mayor Davidson and Councilmember Jaffa stated support for immediate Council consideration of this proposed change.

Discussion ensued regarding slowdowns in development activity; the fact that expected development slowdowns during the holiday season will allow staff training to occur in connection with automation and implementation of a screening and preliminary review team; and recent complaints from the development community alleging that turnaround times are being delayed because of City projects including the Aquatics Facility and the new Mesa Arts Center.

Mr. Hutchinson reported that although plans review of the Mesa Arts Center is being conducted by staff, the Aquatics Facility will be outsourced and he noted that concurrent development of a number of major City facilities is not expected to reoccur in the foreseeable future.

Councilmember Jaffa stressed the importance of pursuing City processes that promote the development of quality projects within the City.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Davidson regarding the status of revised Design Guidelines, Mr. Mizner commented on the review and approval process and noted that the Council will consider an ordinance enacting new Design Guidelines in January 2002.

Mayor Hawker voiced appreciation to staff for the update.

(Councilmember Whalen was excused from the remainder of the meeting at 9:18 a.m.)

4. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of boards and committees.

- a. General Development Committee meeting held October 22, 2001.

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

Mayor Hawker declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

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

Councilmember Pomeroy commented on a recent Convention and Visitor's Bureau meeting he attended and concerns discussed at the meeting regarding the decreased occupancy rate in local hotels and motels. He noted that the occupancy decline during the month of September was not as severe as predicted following the events of September 11, 2001.

6. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, November 15, 2001, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, November 15, 2001, Finance Committee Meeting immediately following Study Session

Monday, November 19, 2001, 3:00 p.m. – Transportation Committee Meeting

Monday, November 19, 2001, TBA – Study Session

Monday, November 19, 2001, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, November 29, 2001, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, November 29, 2001, General Development Committee Meeting immediately following Study Session

Mr. Hutchinson also listed the following events:

Business Speaks event on November 9, 2001 at Williams Gateway Airport;

Numerous Veterans Day events including a pancake breakfast, parade and patriotic program.

Councilmember Walters commented on a Families Conference on Saturday, November 10, 2001 at the Mesa Centennial Hall.

8. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:37 a.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, 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 8th day of November 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

pjt