

COUNCIL MINUTES

November 15, 2004

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 15, 2004 at 4:30 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Rex Griswold
Kyle Jones
Tom Rawles
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Debbie Spinner
Barbara Jones

1. Review items on the agenda for the November 15, 2004 Regular Council meeting.

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

Conflicts of interest declared: 5i (Hawker)

Items removed from the consent agenda: 7c, 7j, 7k, 9, 10

Items added to the consent agenda: None

2. Hear a presentation and discuss and consider various transit issues including the impact of Proposition 400 and Title VI (Civil Rights Act) and transit program.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin advised that staff was present to address questions that were raised at a previous Council Study Session.

Transit Operations Administrator Jim Wright displayed a chart that indicates the "Estimated 2004-2005 Transit Operating Costs" (see Attachment 1). Referring to the "10/20/30 Plan," he noted that the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) initiated the plan prior to Proposition 400 in order to prepare for the agency's anticipated termination of business on December 31, 2005. Mr. Wright explained that Local Transportation Assistance Funds (LTAF) are funds received from the Arizona Lottery.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace referred to the chart on display (see Attachment 2) and advised that the information is provided in response to the Council's request for data regarding the savings available under the original transportation plan. He noted that greater detail is provided on the 11" x 17" chart distributed to the Council titled, "City of Mesa Transit Program – Estimated Cost Avoidance from the Passage of Proposition 400 – Year of Expenditure \$" (see Attachment 3). Mr. Wallace explained that a portion of the savings would be utilized to maintain local bus service. He also noted that the chart reflects the City's commitment to Light Rail Transit (LRT) beginning in December 2008.

Mr. Wright outlined items that were eliminated from the 2002-03 budget in order to provide transit service cost savings (see Attachment 4). He referred to the next chart on display titled, "Peer City Transit Service Comparison" (see Attachment 5), and advised that the cities listed are the same as those being utilized by the Financing the Future Committee for comparison purposes.

Mr. Martin summarized the presentation by noting that the City of Mesa spends a fraction of the amount that the peer cities spend on transit services.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the Elliott Road, Mesa Drive and Stapley Drive routes would continue to be fully funded by the City; that \$800,000 in Quality of Life funding for operating expenses would be ongoing; that the "capital side" of Quality of Life funding would no longer be available, but "operating" expense funding continues; that the City continues to work with the RPTA regarding the future funding of express routes; that over the life of the project the City of Mesa has the opportunity to receive regional funding in the amount of \$111 million; and that LTAF funds are budgeted to continue through the life of the program.

In response to a question from Mayor Hawker, Mr. Wright advised that eliminating a north/south route that is impacted by Title VI would require a public participation process.

Mr. Martin explained that an individual "Title VI protected route" could not be eliminated unless the City decided to eliminate the entire Transit Program.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the item scheduled for consideration at the Council Meeting is the 2004/2005 contract with the RPTA; that \$630,000 in savings on the Dial-A-Ride Program is projected for the 2006/2007 fiscal year; that the Region is committed to funding the required ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) component of the Dial-A-Ride Program; and that a majority of the savings realized from the Regional Transportation Plan would be required to fund the local transit services that are not addressed by the Region.

Councilmember Rawles noted that the funds returned to the City of Mesa represents the half-cent sales tax that will be paid by the citizens of Mesa.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Rawles, Mr. Martin advised that staff is discussing fares with the intent that the fare charged for bus service and for light rail service would be the same amount. Mr. Martin explained that the fare would be established on a regional basis, and he noted that the cities of Phoenix and Tempe provide significantly more transit service than that provided by the City of Mesa.

In response to a question from Councilmember Thom, Mr. Martin advised that the express routes are operated by RPTA utilizing the MV Transportation Company, which provides service at a lower cost than other alternatives. He noted that complaints received by the City when the service provider changed from ATC to MV Transportation have been addressed, and that staff would continue to monitor the situation. Mr. Martin said that the problem of bus passengers standing in the aisles existed prior to the change in providers, and that additional buses have been placed in service. He noted that a continuing problem of passengers standing in the aisles could be addressed by providing additional buses, which would also result in increased costs.

Councilmember Thom said that State Representative Andy Biggs informed her that the payment of fares on the Light Rail Transit system would be optional.

Mr. Wright explained that a "barrier free system" is being considered. He advised that the system is similar to the practice utilized in Portland, Oregon, in which the passenger purchases a ticket from a vending machine, and that no barriers are present that would prohibit a passenger from boarding with or without a ticket. Mr. Wright added that monitors randomly check passengers for receipts, and that a Portland passenger without a receipt can be fined approximately \$125. He noted that research indicates that the "barrier free system" has been successful.

Mr. Hawker thanked staff for the presentation, and he stated that discussion of this item could continue at the Regular Council Meeting scheduled to begin at 5:45 p.m.

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 Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, November 18, 2004, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, November 18, 2004, 9:30 a.m. – Fire Committee

Thursday, December 2, 2004, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, December 6, 2004, TBA – Study Session

Monday, December 6, 2004, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

5. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

6. Items from citizens present.

Mercedes Mercado-Ochoa, 724 North Vineyard Street, addressed the Council regarding transportation issues. She stated that the City of Mesa has the highest percentage of elderly and disabled citizens in the Valley, and she expressed concern relative to possible reductions in transportation that serves this population.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:43 p.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 15th day of November 2004. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (5)