

COUNCIL MINUTES

September 29, 2005

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 29, 2005 at 7:30 a.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

(Vice Mayor Walters participated in the meeting via teleconferencing equipment.)

1. Joint Meeting with the Planning and Zoning Board.

Mayor Hawker expressed appreciation to the members of the Planning and Zoning Board (P&Z) for their willingness to attend a joint meeting with the Council.

The following P&Z members introduced themselves to the Council: Frank Mizner, Rich Adams, Barbara Carpenter, Alex Finter, Jared Langkilde and Bob Saemisch.

Mr. Adams thanked the Council for the opportunity to meet with them and said he hoped the gathering would result in more effective communications between both entities.

a. Discuss and provide direction on freeway landmark signs.

Mr. Saemisch read a document reflecting an agreement reached by the P&Z with regard to freeway landmark signs. (See Attachment 1.) He explained that the P&Z has approved three sets of those signs and experienced difficulty reconciling the results with the Freeway Landmark Sign ordinance. Mr. Saemisch inquired whether the Council would be willing to consider requesting that the P&Z, the Design Review Board (DRB) and other interested parties review the ordinance and bring back recommendations to the Council regarding more definitive guidelines (i.e., height, location, sign area).

Zoning Administrator Gordon Sheffield displayed a map illustrating possible freeway landmark sign locations that currently meet the criteria contained in the Freeway Landmark Sign Guidelines.

Councilmembers Whalen, Thom and Griswold expressed support for the P&Z reviewing the ordinance and providing input to the Council at some future date.

Councilmember Rawles said he would prefer that the P&Z consider greater refinement or clarification of the ordinance as opposed to imposing further restrictions or limitations.

Vice Mayor Walters commented that she would like the Guidelines to more clearly articulate that freeway landmark signs are not permitted to block mountain views and vistas. She added that she would favor the approval of only "a handful" of freeway landmark signs in order to prevent visual clutter throughout the community.

- b. Discuss and provide direction on ways to streamline and improve the development review process.

Mr. Finter provided a short synopsis of the P&Z's draft memo regarding the streamlining of the City's planning process. (See Attachment 2.) He explained that areas the P&Z wish to consider in the coming months include the creation of a Planning Hearing Officer's position and a site plan modification approval process. Mr. Finter advised that pending the outcome of those discussions, the P&Z would make recommendations to the Council. He also expressed appreciation to Planning Director John Wesley and his staff for their hard work and willingness to participate in this regard.

Extensive discussion ensued among the Council and the P&Z relative to the importance of the citizen participation/public hearing process with regard to P&Z cases; that the Board would support streamlining the introduction/adoption policy of zoning ordinances as long as those components remained intact; that such modifications would assist Mesa in becoming more business friendly and competitive with other communities; and that it was the consensus of the Council that staff prepare proposed Charter change language to streamline said policy and also that such language reflect that the citizen participation ordinance would not be changed or compromised in any manner.

- c. Discuss and provide direction on ways to improve Sub-Area planning.

Ms. Carpenter offered a brief analysis of a document drafted by the P&Z regarding "Sub-Area Planning." (See Attachment 3.) Her comments included, but were not limited to, the following: that the Mesa 2025 General Plan, which was approved by voters three years ago, called for seven Sub-Area Plans; that to-date, only the Citrus Sub-Area Plan has been completed; that applicants often appear before the Board with proposals to "recreate" a specific Sub-Area, which results in Mesa's development process suffering; that Sub-Area Plans are significant tools that can guide quality development from its early stages; and that she requested input from the Council regarding their priorities for the Sub-Areas.

An extensive discussion ensued among the Council and the P&Z regarding the purpose of the Sub-Area Plans and the City's involvement in that process; that it is often perceived that the Sub-Area Plans are similar to CC&Rs, as opposed to general guidelines for a specific area of the community; that the Sub-Area Plans offer a significant venue for citizen participation; that the original goal of the Sub-Area Plans was to reduce conflict between neighborhoods, developers and the City; and that after Sub-Area Plan guidelines have been in place for a period of time, it would be appropriate to assess whether they have been successful or require certain modifications.

Councilmember Rawles voiced a series of concerns regarding the process and stated that in his opinion, citizen participation is acceptable, but "citizen control" is not. He added that he was offended by certain language in the draft document including "hungry developers" and "unfettered self-interest" and requested that it be resubmitted to the Council before it becomes a part of the record.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the Central Broadway Sub-Area is not clearly defined; that perhaps the area could be developed as a result of its ethnic populations and the residents could participate in the development of their community including its policing, code enforcement and zoning; that it is ultimately within the Council's purview to establish the Sub-Areas and not merely rely on the currently proposed areas as displayed on the above-referenced map; and that staff was directed to conduct an analysis with regard to the cost to proceed with the possible development of one Sub-Area Plan each year.

Mr. Adams advised that the P&Z would review the draft document in reference to the concerns expressed by Councilmember Rawles.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and consider recommended health insurance premiums and plan design changes.

Assistant Human Resources Director Donna Salemi referred to the September 23, 2005 City Council Report and provided a brief overview of staff's recommended premium structures for the City's health insurance plans, the recommended changes to the medical, dental and prescription drug plans, and also recommendations for the vision and short-term disability contracts for the 2006 plan year. (The complete report is available for review in the City Clerk's Office.) She explained that the Employee Benefit Trust Fund balance has significantly decreased as a result of increased healthcare costs and said that the proposed changes to the benefit plan design would reduce expenses and the financial liability for the Trust, as well as increase premiums.

Councilmember Jones expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts and hard work with regard to this issue. He also stressed the importance of employees becoming better consumers and utilizing, whenever possible, generic drugs and mail order prescriptions.

Vice Mayor Walters, as a member of the Employee Benefits Advisory Committee, acknowledged that determining the proposed rate increases was a difficult decision, especially in light of the fact that employees have not received a cost of living adjustment (COLA) and would, in essence, experience a functional pay cut. She noted, however, that it is essential that the Trust Fund remains stable and balanced.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Jones, that staff's recommended plan design changes and premium structures for the City's Medical Plan, be approved.

Councilmember Rawles concurred with Councilmember Jones' comments regarding City employees becoming wiser consumers in an effort to control healthcare costs. He also suggested that it might be appropriate to distribute educational materials to staff regarding the cost benefits of mail order prescriptions.

Mayor Hawker called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Thom, that staff's recommended plan design changes and premium structures for the City's Dental Plan, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Thom, that the Short-Term Disability proposal presented by Standard Life Insurance, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Jones, that staff's recommended plan design changes and premium structures for the City's Vision Plan, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Mayor Hawker thanked Ms. Salemi for her presentation.

3. Hear an update and consider the proposed City Manager recruitment schedule.

City Attorney Debbie Spinner referred to a document entitled "Proposed City Manager Recruitment Schedule" and provided a short synopsis of the upcoming meetings relative to this issue.

Mayor Hawker advised that he has requested the assistance of City Clerk Barbara Jones and City Attorney Debbie Spinner during the City Manager recruitment process.

4. Discuss and consider proceeding with initiating the recruitment process for a new Police Chief.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson reported that Police Chief Dennis Donna has announced his retirement effective December 31, 2005. He stated that he is recommending that staff begin the recruitment and selection process for Chief Donna's replacement, which should be concluded by April 2006.

5. Appointments to boards and committees.

Mayor Hawker advised that he withdrew the recommended appointment of Malcom "Mac" Bolton to the Economic Development Advisory Board.

Mayor Hawker recommended the following appointments to Boards and Committees:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Robert Pothier – Term expires June 30, 2008

HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD

Alejandro Contreras, Jr. – Term expires June 30, 2008

Robert Blaylock – Term expires June 30, 2006

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

William Egan – Term expires June 30, 2008

Blake Simms – Term expires June 30, 2006

LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD

Sharon Corea – Term expires June 30, 2006

It was moved by Councilmember Rawles, seconded by Councilmember Jones, that the Council concur with the Mayor's recommendations and the appointments be confirmed.

Carried unanimously.

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

- a. Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on August 16, 2005
- b. Design Review Board meeting held on September 7, 2005

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

Carried unanimously.

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

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| Mayor Hawker: | Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) meeting. |
| Councilmember Thom: | Crescent Run Homeowners Association meeting; Community Advisory Panel meeting |
| Councilmember Griswold: | Skyline High School meeting regarding DUI issues. |

8. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

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

Thursday, October 6, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, October 10, 2005, 3:00 p.m. – Fire Committee

Monday, October 10, 2005, TBA – Study Session

Monday, October 10, 2005, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, October 13, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, October 20, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, October 20, 2005, 8:30 a.m. – Transportation Committee

Monday, October 24, 2005, TBA – Study Session

Monday, October 24, 2005, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

9. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

10. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

11. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:19 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 29th day of September 2005. 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 (3)

Attachment 1
Joint Planning and Zoning Board/City Council Meeting

DRAFT

Freeway Landmark Signs

The Planning and Zoning Board has approved three sets of Freeway Landmark Signs to date and found difficulties reconciling the results with the ordinance. Specifically, we would like to know, if council sees merit in revisiting the ordinance for more definitive guidelines; height, location, sign area, number of brand panels per sign and reader board specifications including message frequency. It appears the original intent of the ordinance has been expanding on a case by case basis and now would be an appropriate time to consider future limitations and goals.

At the pleasure of the Mayor and Council, members of the P/Z, DRB Boards and other interested citizens could form a committee and, with the assistance of staff, review the ordinance and bring back recommendations to Council.

Prepared by:
Boardmember Saemisch

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Joint Planning and Zoning Board/City Council Meeting

DRAFT

Streamline the Planning Process

The Planning & Zoning Board members recognize the importance of a streamlined zoning process to encourage development in Mesa. We also recognize that a complete, objective and fair review of zoning cases by fellow citizens can result in an informed recommendation to the City council. A zoning process that encourages citizen participation is paramount.

Preplanning tools like those suggested in the infill report and streamlining recommendations like those found in the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Revitalization, can go along way to improving the way planning and zoning is conducted in Mesa.

Over the next few months, The Planning and Zoning board will be considering issues such as A Planning Hearing Officer and The Site Plan Modifications Approval Process. We will be making recommendations to the City Council to improve Customer Service in these areas. In Addition, We support reducing the amount of time between the Planning and Zoning Hearing and The City Council meetings when Zoning Ordinances are introduced.

Our goal is to contribute both individually and as a Board to Streamlining the Service that is provided to the Citizens of Mesa.

Prepared by:
Boardmember Finter

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Joint Planning and Zoning Board/City Council Meeting

DRAFT

SUB-AREA PLANNING

The scenario

The Mesa 2025 General Plan, now three years old, calls for further guidance in the form of seven "community sub-area plans." The Citrus Sub-Area Plan is the only one completed and that was over two years ago. Another neighborhood-driven plan is struggling toward a completed draft and a third, also neighborhood-driven, is "on hold." Three beg for action and two have or will have only limited guidance and no sub-area plan.

Meanwhile, freeway installations, hungry developers and rapid change are passing us by and taking charge. Mesa's development process has suffered and the City needs to take leadership control. The General Plan framework is there; Sub-Area plans are powerful tools that can guide quality development from the earliest stage.

Other City plans and priorities are important influences on land use planning and vice-versa. Lack of joint planning among these interests (transportation, transit, economic development, housing, redevelopment/revitalization, and growth) hinders effectiveness and forward motion. More importantly, it leaves our City vulnerable to unfettered self-interested development and a flood of major and minor plan amendments.

Our request for Council guidance

- Please specify Sub-Area planning priorities and direct urgency and resources to planning efforts.
- Please direct support and resources for planning. The best way we can do this is through sub-area planning.

Prepared by:
Boardmember Carpenter

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