

COUNCIL MINUTES

August 14, 2003

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 August 14, 2003 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Dennis Kavanaugh
Rex Griswold
Kyle Jones
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Debbie Spinner
Barbara Jones

Mayor Hawker excused Councilmember Walters from the beginning of the meeting. She joined the meeting at 7:36 a.m. and apologized for being late. She noted there were existing traffic jams on Brown and Mesa Drive.

1. Presentation by representatives of the Mesa HoHoKam organization.

Mr. Tom Rhodes, representing the Mesa HoHoKams, said that thanks to Councilmember Whalen, their organization learned that funding for the "Open Gym" program at Taft Elementary School had been drastically cut. He stated that the HoHoKam organization decided to donate the \$11,500 necessary to enable the very worthwhile program to continue over the next twelve months and presented the City with a check for that amount.

Mayor Hawker thanked the HoHoKams and the HoHoKam Foundation for their donation and continuing support and commended them for their year-to-date contributions to charities totaling an additional \$65,000.

2. Further discussion and consideration of signage at Mesa Centennial Center/Mesa Amphitheatre.

Assistant Community Services Manager Joseph Holmwood and Centennial Center Director Rhett Evans presented an update to the Council on plans for signage at Mesa Centennial Center/Mesa Amphitheatre. Mr. Evans noted that the signage issue had been discussed previously at a General Development Committee Meeting and at a Council Study Session. He

reviewed aspects of the signage program, which is designed to increase revenue and concession sales as well as promote downtown partners and area vendors.

Mr. Evans noted that the Council had expressed concern about the program and requested additional information. He added that the first concern was the possibility of allowing tobacco signage inside the Amphitheatre, but noted that findings by the City Attorney determined that recent case law precludes tobacco products from being advertised on outdoor billboards and supports the right of the venue to determine the types of commercial signage allowed in a facility.

Mr. Evans also addressed the issue of the language used in the Sponsorship Agreement that states the City has sole discretion to cover up any sign not conducive to a particular event. He commented that in response to the Council's request to have staff check on how other venues handle this problem, the findings support Mesa's proposed agreement that provides the venue with final approval of all signage.

In response to Mayor Hawker's question, Mr. Evans noted that the owner of a covered sign would not get a refund and that is spelled out in the agreement.

Mayor Hawker requested examples of how the signs would look, and Mr. Evans distributed a photo to the Councilmembers and then displayed the photo on the Elmo.

Mayor Hawker asked if the duration of contracts would vary.

Mr. Evans responded that the marquee is the biggest signage proposal with an expected contract duration of five years. He noted that the other signs would be contracted for a minimum of two years.

In response to question from Councilmember Whalen, City Manager Mike Hutchinson said that staff would look into advertising revenue generation.

Councilmember Walters emphasized the importance of ensuring that the signage "fits in" architecturally with some of the buildings and suggested that staff work with Gerry Fathauer on this important component.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that although 14 actual signs could be erected, staff does not anticipate that the number will be that high.

Mr. Evans explained that advertisers would have a choice of various locations and staff did not anticipate that all sign locations would be sold.

Mayor Hawker expressed concern that the proposed signage on municipal buildings may conflict with the design standards that the Council has endorsed to improve the appearance of the downtown area. He also suggested that having an exclusive agreement with a beverage company such as Coke or Pepsi could generate more income for the City.

Councilmember Whalen concurred with Mayor Hawker on the positive benefits of entering into an exclusive agreement and he also expressed concern regarding the possibility of a proliferation of signs.

Responding to Councilmember Walters' concern relative to an over-abundance of signs, Mr. Evans noted that when the actual signs are in place, the area would not look that crowded. He explained that some signs would only advertise upcoming events or just advertise one particular event.

Councilmember Griswold stated that he has great faith in staff's ability and trusts that staff will do a good job.

Councilmember Thom agreed with Councilmember Griswold and noted that other venues successfully utilize a variety of ads. She complimented Mr. Evans for his efforts.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh said he believes there could be appropriate locations in the Amphitheater for sponsorship signs as well as an opportunity for exclusive signs.

Councilmember Jones indicated that although he had reservations earlier, he does not object to signs inside the venue. He also concurred with Councilmember Walters that staff should make sure that no inappropriate signs are erected.

In response to a question from Mayor Hawker, Mr. Evans advised that there are three permanent exterior signs: the ticket box and along side the ticket windows.

Responding to Councilmember Walters' question, Mr. Evans advised that the signs are going to be professionally back lit and similar to what is seen at Bank One Ballpark and America West Arena. He emphasized that the signs will look extremely professional.

In response to a question from Mayor Hawker, Mr. Evans noted that a section on "Design Approval" is included in the Sponsorship Agreement.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the City could impose certain restrictions as long as the restrictions are reasonable and equitable.

Mayor Hawker expressed the opinion that he could see future lawsuits regarding signage.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson commented that there was a strong possibility the City could generate more than \$25,000 in income from the advertising program.

It was moved by Councilmember Griswold, seconded by Councilmember Whalen, that the signage program be approved.

Motion carried by majority vote (6-1), Mayor Hawker nay.

3. Hear a status report on Light Rail Transit (LRT) End-of-the-Line Station.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin introduced Wulf Grote and Marc Soronson with Valley Metro Rail, Judy Klein representing Amerimar, and Attorney Ralph Pew, Pew & Lake.

Mr. Martin stated that staff was present to update the Mayor and Council on efforts to establish an end-of-the-line light rail transit (LRT) station and a park-and-ride lot. He noted that the station in Mesa is projected to have the second highest ridership and the project will provide opportunities for redevelopment as well as revitalization for neighborhood residents and businesses. Mr. Martin advised that the City entered into a contribution agreement where Rising Sun will contribute up to \$200,000 toward design and engineering costs while negotiating a contract for the City to use and lease the site for a transit center and regional park-and-ride lot. He added that he expects to have an agreement ready for Council consideration in late September or early October. Mr. Martin said that "meet and greet" sessions are planned to provide homeowners and businesses an opportunity to provide their input to the design team and City staff.

Ms. Klein commented that the mall was demolished except for the J C Penney building and that an agreement has been reached with Safeway and other shops to go into this area and, with the addition of amenities such as landscaping and parking lots, the area is beginning to look better.

Mr. Soronson advised that the rail and platform would be located in the middle of the site and noted the importance of a bus facility as well as a park-and-ride lot being located close to the station to enable riders to easily transfer to light rail.

Mr. Martin explained that the initial plan included the demolition of the J C Penney building to make that area a part of the park-and-ride lot. He noted that staff is working to retain three or four acres fronting Main Street for future development. Mr. Martin stressed the importance of reaching a consensus relative to where the transit center will be located.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh expressed his appreciation for the work being done on this issue. He noted that the project is a prime example of the private and public sectors being able to cooperate and work together. Vice Mayor Kavanaugh commented that the J C Penney building has long been a thorn to area residents.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Kavanaugh, a staff member responded that the project is a transit-oriented development created for an end-of-the-line station.

In answer to Councilmember Whalen's question as to what would happen to this project if federal funds disappeared, Mr. Martin responded that there would be a clause in the contract to address that situation should it arise.

Councilmember Whalen noted that Sycamore would not work for the park-and-ride lot.

Councilmember Walters thanked everyone working on this project and agreed with Councilmember Whalen that there is a potential problem with Sycamore.

Mayor Hawker expressed his opinion that the proposed site will be revitalized, but noted that the site may not be the future end of the line. He added that extending light rail would be in the best interest of the City of Mesa and a lot of options are available. Mayor Hawker asked how many acres would be required to park 700 cars.

Mr. Martin replied that as a general rule, eight acres would be required for 700 cars, allowing for 100 cars per acre with landscaping, and there are a total 15.9 acres available for this project.

Mayor Hawker expressed concern relative to the distance people will have to walk to get to the light rail station.

Mr. Martin responded that other transit stations around the country were reviewed and generally attempts are made to minimize walking distances. He reported that bus transfer stations are typically located next to the light rail station.

Ms. Klein noted that the plan is to move the Firestone business from the Sycamore location and advised that federal funds are available for that purpose.

Mayor Hawker added that moving Firestone would then change Sycamore, making the site more accessible.

In response to Councilmember Thom's comments about estimated costs and ridership figures, Mr. Martin advised that cost information is not presently available, but funding would be 80 percent federal and 20 percent local. He explained that since the final layout is not complete, the specific costs are not available. Mr. Martin noted that the ridership figure of 9,238 was a daily estimate and based on information from the Maricopa Association of Governments. He further stated that staff employed sophisticated methodology to develop comparisons and then used the data to prepare model forecasts that Federal Transportation officials have applauded.

Councilmember Griswold commented that the plans seem to make a lot of common sense.

Mayor Hawker thanked staff and the representatives from Amerimar and Valley Metro Rail for the update.

4. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of boards and committees.

- a. Downtown Development Committee meeting held July 17, 2003.

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

Carried unanimously.

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

The following members of the Council provided brief updates on various meetings/conferences they attended as follows:

Councilmember Whalen – Arizona Corporation Commission Line Setting Hearing

Councilmember Griswold – Attended meeting on gravel pits.

6. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

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

Thursday, August 21, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, August 21, 2003 – Executive Session following Study

Thursday, August 21, 2003, 9:00 a.m. – City Council Tour of various West Mesa areas

Monday, August 25, 2003, 3:00 p.m. – Police Committee

Monday, August 25, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, August 25, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, August 28, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session (Cancelled)

Thursday, September 4, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, September 8, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, September 8, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

7. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

8. Items from citizens present.

None

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 8:24 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 14th day of August 2003. 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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