

Sierra Vista City Council
Work Session Minutes
March 12, 2024

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey called the March 12, 2024, City Council Work Session to order at 3:00 p.m., Council Chambers, City Hall, 1011 N. Coronado Drive, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Mayor Clea McCaa – absent
Mayor Pro Tem Carolyn Umphrey – present
Council Member William Benning – absent
Council Member Gregory Johnson – absent
Council Member Angelica Landry – present
Council Member Marta Messmer - present
Council Member Mark Rodriguez – absent

Others Present:

Chuck Potucek, City Manager
Victoria Yarbrough, Assistant City Manager
Chris Hiser, Police Chief
Brian Jones, Fire Chief
Sharon Flissar, Public Works Director
Irene Zuniga, Capital Improvements and Development Manager
Gabriel Squires, Public Works Internal Operations Manager
Allen Humphrey, Senior Civil Engineer
Laura Wilson, Leisure, Parks, and Library Director
Emily Duchon, Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services Manager
Jeff Pregler, Planner
Blake Fisher, Planner
David Felix, Chief Financial Officer
Jennifer Dillaha, Budget Officer/Management Analyst II
Tony Boone, Economic Development Director
Dianna Cameron, Economic Development Business Liaison
Lauren Healey, Management Analyst
Adam Curtis, Marketing and Communications Manager

2. Presentation and Discussion:

- a. March 14, 2024 Council Meeting Agenda Items ([agenda attached](#))

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey stated that the agenda starts with the call to order, roll call, invocation led by Pastor Greg Rowles with God is Good Church, the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member Messmer, followed by a presentation of the Award of Financial Reporting Achievement.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Mr. Potucek stated that out to bid is the RFP for the needs assessment for the municipal court that are due on March 15, 2024; at 10:00 a.m.; the Pedestrian Walkway Connections Project which is grant funded were opened and an award is pending; two bids were received for the Annual Street Maintenance Project and that award is pending; the Solar Street Lights Project in the Montebello/Whispering Springs Subdivision is pending its award for the bid results on the Pedestrian Walkway; and the contract is ready for

the feasibility study for the Space Re-entry port at the Sierra Vista Municipal Airport. Lastly, he reported that the January sales tax numbers are flat, but the City is still 2.82 percent over Fiscal Year 2023 and 5.68 percent over budget. There is still a slight decrease in retail numbers, but food is pretty much carrying the growth in the sales tax and that was up 18 percent; however, the rest of retail was down 1 percent, a concern for the City.

Item 2.1 Discussion and Possible Action of the Special City Council Meeting Minutes of February 20, 2024 – There was no discussion.

Item 2.2 Discussion and Possible Action of the Work Session Minutes of February 20, 2024 - There was no discussion.

Item 2.3 Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2024-010, Resignation of Shelly Short from the Sierra Vista Environmental Stewardship Commission - There was no discussion.

Item 2.4 Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2024-011, Acceptance of Sewer Easements from Northeast Highway 90/92 Limited Partnership - There was no discussion.

Item 3 Consideration of funding requests for Program Year 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Annual Action Plan

Mr. Fisher stated that this item is for consideration for a funding request for the Community Development Block Grant. The City is expecting to receive \$250,000 to allocate this round, although the City will be receiving an official amount from HUD in the coming weeks. Applicants for this year include Good Neighbor, Alliance, United Way, and the Boys and Girls Club, as well as the City's own proposals. The applicants will have about 10 minutes at the dais to make their cases on Thursday, March 14, 2024, with five minutes for Q&A each. There is also a quick reference table in the back page of the staff memo that lists who is requesting what and for what purpose, as well as staff recommendations, which will be displayed on the screen on Thursday, March 14, 2024 for Council to reference. During their presentations, staff will use feedback given in preparation for the next Annual Action Plan, which will be heard about during the public hearing on April 11, 2024.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey asked if the applicants were informed about the change in the recommended amount. She noted that the applicants are asking for more than what would fit within the \$250.

Mr. Potucek stated that there are requirements/restrictions placed on the amount of money that may be awarded to nonprofits and asked Mr. Fisher to notify the applicants. Mr. Fisher stated that the applicants were notified, and Mr. McLachlan had discussions with them. Wheat Design agreed to split their allocation and Wheat Design understand that there is a maximum of 15 percent of the total funding allocation that can be given for public services.

Mr. Potucek noted that it is not even \$40,000. Mr. Fisher stated that he is correct.

Item 4 Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2024-012, Request to proceed with an Abandonment of a portion of Charleston Road Right-of-Way

Mr. Pregler stated that this item is a request to proceed with an abandonment of a portion of Charleston Road right-of-way and noted that the City owns quite a bit of right-of-way along Charleston Road. He displayed a map depicting the right-of-way, the area that is being

proposed to be abandoned adjacent to Cochise Crossroads Shopping Center.

There is an existing sewer line along State Route 90 that is failing and extremely difficult to maintain. To bypass the flow from this line, staff is proposing to construct a new sewer line which will parallel Charleston Road, extend from State Route 90, and continue through the abandoned area to conclude at the eastern property line of parcel 107-16-026H, south of the abandoned area owned by Cochise Crossroads. The failing sewer line will be abandoned once the new sewer line is connected.

A sewer easement is required to maintain public sewer lines located on private property and portions of the sewer line will be located on the subject property. Being proposed is a 22 1/2-foot-wide sewer easement. The owner of the parcel, Cochise Crossroads, has agreed to provide the City the easements that will be used for private development. The acceptance of these easements is a separate item under the Consent Agenda.

In exchange for providing the City the sewer easements, the City has agreed to abandon a portion of Charleston Road right-of-way. According to Arizona Revised Statutes, title to any vacated or abandoned roadway vest with the abutting property owner, Cochise Crossroads, which will obtain the title to the property. The City has no need for the property as it exceeds the 100 feet of right-of-way needed for arterial roadways. As part of the abandonment of the property, another 22 1/2-foot-wide easement will be obtained and recorded which will provide a continuous easement area extending the length of the sewer line.

Approval of the resolution by the Mayor and City Council directs staff to proceed with the process of abandonment which involves staff contacting all utility companies for their approval and a public hearing before the Planning Zoning Commission and the Mayor and City Council.

Mr. Potucek referenced the map and stated that he does not remember how the City acquired so much land in that area, but it could prove to be a hindrance to the future development of that area if the City were to hold on to it. Therefore, this might facilitate future development of that parcel.

Item 5 Discussion and Possible Action of Resolution 2024-013, Transfer of Funds from the General Fund to the Highway User Revenue, Capital Improvements, and additional FY24 PSPRS contribution

Mr. Felix stated that per City Policy, before finalizing the books for the prior fiscal year, staff looks at any fund balance to add to the General Fund and makes a recommendation to Council to leave it all in the General Fund, move it to other funds, or apply to it additional things as needs may come up and there are excess funds from that year. Staff is still closing the books and working with the auditors on finalizing and getting the ACFR done. The City is currently looking at about a \$5.6 million revenue over expenditure in the General Fund for last fiscal year due to the transaction privilege tax and state shared revenues that were up over expected. On the expenditure side, staff had budgeted the Animal Control Facility that did not yet get done and when projects carry over, per City Policy, staff budgets for that from new funds. There are \$2,000,000 from last year's Animal Care facility that was not expended, and there are also a couple vehicles and other things that carried over to this fiscal year as well. The recommendation is to move \$2,000,000 from the General Fund into HURF to help with streets in general. Also, if the City gets the grant for Garden Avenue, then those funds can be used for Wilcox or another pressing street that may come up. There is another \$1,000,000 to go into the Capital Improvement Fund for general purposes because there are a couple projects that are outstanding, and grants

for other things hanging out there. If the City does not get these funds, the City can use the funds for one of those projects.

The PSPRS Policy has been very good, and staff is looking at taking \$2,000,000 for an extra payment for this fiscal year, \$1.25 million to the Police and \$750,000 to Fire. When the Finance Report come outs, it will show as a \$2,000,000 reserve General Fund balance, not available for any usage because being approved is the expenditure this year from last year funds. Therefore, it will restrict the General Fund reserves and the payment would be made next week if Council approves this action on Thursday, March 14, 2024. This still leaves about \$700,000 that will go to the General Fund balance and the final number will be dependent on any audit changes or anything else the auditors have.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey asked for clarification. Mr. Felix stated that \$700,000 will be left for unrestricted General Fund reserve balance which will take the fund balance to about \$7.1 to \$7.7 million. Mr. Potucek stated that this is the City's reserve.

Council Member Landry thanked Mr. Felix for the breakdown and noted that taking care of the streets and people is important.

b. [Midyear Financial Review](#)

Mr. Felix stated that the City is well ahead of budget. The month of December is the biggest sales tax month of the year, this is the peak, and seen is the highest revenue budget variation that will continue to taper off through the rest of the fiscal year. In December, it was over six percent, but now 5.8 percent and it will continue to taper off. The biggest reasons for the revenue over expenses are one, the Animal Control Facility has not yet been started, there is over \$1,000,000 worth of vehicles that are still awaiting delivery which are budget to be cashed out, staff has not yet done any transfers, but those are done at the end of the year, and budgeted were one-time expenses for the extra \$2,000,000 in regards to the state shared income tax because that is being changed over a three-year period.

This next year there will be about \$1,000,000 of a one-time expense being put in for and the income tax, state shared income tax is expected at a low point, two years from now into the 2026 budget at about \$8.1 million when the City is expected to receive \$12 million this year. This is the reason that the staff budgets if Wheat Design know it is a one-time expense like this year. Staff knew that \$2 million was kind of a tapering off; therefore, staff took the \$2 million to budget to one-time expenditures and being fiscally conservative.

If the City at the end of the fiscal year has a larger revenue over expenditure fund balance, staff will come before Council probably in November of next year or later this year to give recommendations on where to move that if there is anything. The Animal Control facility will not be finished by the end of the year; therefore, there will be some funds leftover and that will be seen in the upcoming budget of being budgeted from new funds as well.

c. [Roadrunner Park Design Concepts](#)

Ms. Wilson stated that the Roadrunner Concept Plans have been over 20 years in the making. Ms. Laura Mielcarek with Wheat Design Group was going to present but due to technical difficulties will be unable to do so.

There was a large public comment period in 2022 in person and set up at the adjacent Garden

Canyon Linear Park area where there were discussions with the people that showed up. Also used was the Engage Platform, which was very successful as there were over 1,400 responses from the community; therefore, using these different formats really does lend itself to giving more of the demographic population a space to be heard.

The City awarded the contract at the end of August 2023 to Wheat Design Group and selected them as the City's partners to design Roadrunner Park. Wheat Design had their kickoff in September and are now ready with two concepts, which have been shared with the Parks and Recreation Commission for feedback by March 12, 2024. Their feedback will also go into a final conceptual plan and staff is hoping that after this there can be some consensus that they are on the right track and can move forward. Once there is a final concept, staff will come back to Council that will include the public comments as the centerpiece for these designs.

Ms. Wilson thanked the internal team for their help, Sharon Flissar, Tony Boone, Matt McLaughlin, the Parks Maintenance Team, and introduced the Wheat Design team, Laura Mielcarek, Wheat Design Group Professional Landscape Architect, the Principal, Wheat Design Group Designers Yennifer Yarosz, Aliz Potucek, Jenny Moscato, and Kevin Letendre, Psomas Civil Engineer. Their approach was a discovery phase, a vision phase, and a creation phase. Wheat Design came out and did a site analysis and inventory, walked the area, and studied the flora and fauna, and kept the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a guiding point into their design. Wheat Design understands what the City is trying to accomplish, and the public is once again at the center of that.

A slide was shown of Wheat Design's word bubble of the biggest things that came out of the public comment period.

With respect to demographics, 34 is the median age of Garden Canyon Linear Park users provided by Placer and AI like Placer. Twenty-two percent of Sierra Vista is under 18 years of age, there are 9.9000 visitors from September 1, 2022 through August 31, 2023, and the average stay is currently 43 minutes.

A graph was displayed of the public comments received through Engage. All the public comments that happened in person were rolled into the Engage platform so that everybody's voices were heard. Over 1,100 were virtual and the remainder were in person. It is important to note that everybody was counted and heard. The top things that were gleaned from those surveys were walking, playground, and a place to have picnics and exercise - a lot of outdoor activities.

Wheat Design included environmental context about the area and recognizes that the City is the Hummingbird Capital. A slide was shown of their environmental context, where it is located and all the beauty that surrounds it.

There was a lot of site analysis recognizing lines in the area, vegetation, etc. Wheat Design conducted a viewshed study to find the best places to sit and look at the sunsets, opportunities, and constraints. In the design, Wheat Design used some of the constraints as opportunities in unique ways that would be great for people who use the park.

A slide was shown of the process with drawings. The first time that staff met with Wheat Design, it was a dreaming session, talking about what the City wanted to see, how the park users are seen, what these people do, and what the City would like to be seen in a new park concept. This is a regional park, a large piece of land. Therefore, it was thought that this was enough

property to do a lot of things simultaneously, but with the feeling that they are separate, i.e., the Disney concept that has a center point like Main Street, but with different worlds that are easy to get through from the main gathering point. Wheat Design incorporated that into both designs, explored the challenges, and looked at passive and active recreation in a place that celebrates the rich native vegetation in the space.

Concept 1 - Adventurous Play, depicts a center area with everything else breaking out from it. This will be seen in both concepts, but Wheat Design will have different event spaces. This concept has large green space, which was talked about being important, while protecting as much vegetation as possible and using native plants and walking paths throughout. There is also shade and water features; however, it is unknown if these are going to make it in the final plan. There is a bicycle skills course, walking paths throughout the design for people to quickly go to the center and get to another space in the park. There are walking paths, a one-acre green space, a skills course, exercise area, splash pads, playground, and restrooms throughout. This design is a dream park design, more modern than the other one because the other one gets a little more rustic and natural.

The central area, a central plaza space, has a playground area, a lot of green space in the center and a splash pad location. There will be a water feature that mimics the lawn in Washington DC to bring in elements on how to bring water into the desert, a space in a recyclable fashion, along with a drop off point.

The southwest corner was a very important place when looking at an event space which is a drop-dead gorgeous backdrop of the Huachuca Mountains. Therefore, there were discussions on its importance and visualizing people playing frisbee, activities, or even putting up a large event tent for a private party with a large circular ramada location that could be used as a photo backdrop for family photos, weddings, and parties. Adjacent to that, but still far away, would be a challenge course.

The northeast corner, the back of it, is the fitness space which will have a lot of natural elements to it along with a bicycle skills course. There are walking trails throughout, restroom locations.

Examples were shown of what the central could be; however, it is not yet to the point where things are being picked out to be put there. There will be large, shaded area with wind sails that when damaged can have one piece replaced versus the whole. There are other natural elements and creative designs in the concept too.

Examples of water features when entering the park were displayed, something that is interactive, low maintenance, and using recirculating water.

The playground is a more modernized version than what will be seen in the next concept. This is a sweeping design space that would look great on aerial maps. There are a lot of elements, opportunity play for children to mitigate taking chances because a lot of time kids do not have safe spaces.

The splash pad is more of what would be expected to be found in larger cities, more traditional splash pads. Wheat Design made sure that inclusive play was in everything, every element of these designs was very important, making sure that there is ADA accessibility, and that children of all abilities would have spaces to play together.

Event space ideas were shown. Originally, Wheat Design was looking at octagon designs,

round for event spaces, but Wheat Design wanted to provide an overview of some other things that are out there. No pavilion style elements are going in there because this park is in the middle of a neighborhood. There could be music played, lower format bands, but no blown out concerts.

An example of a challenge course was shown that has a military throwback to it because the City has a large veteran community. The elements enable people to start slow and increase stamina and be able to work out with family and friends. There is a bike skills course designed with a lot of options, movable pieces that can make the bike skills course different throughout time. There are large shade trees around it so that there is a lot of natural shade.

One thing that was talked about on both concepts with Wheat Designs was the need to also have workout areas near playgrounds because sometimes parents want to work out while their kids play, but Wheat Design want to be able to see them. Therefore, having those things and incorporating seating within a playground area was very important.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey voiced her appreciation at this thought because this has been an issue for parents who are not able to sit comfortably anywhere while their children are playing.

Concept II - Where people and nature connect and thrive. This concept is very natural and focuses on the natural elements. Balance was the passive and active recreation and sustainable and low impact designs, focusing on the habitat in the area, the flora and fauna, and the animals.

The entrance is a center point that goes out and does not look like there is as much in it because Wheat Design left a lot of it very natural. This concept combined some elements of both concepts, which helps reduce costs if the natural space can be conserved. Also, this concept focuses on a lot of nature trails, the water play, and nature playgrounds. Things are very rustic, and there is a habitat restoration area that was made into an educational opportunity in the park space so that people can learn about the wonderful things that are being done in Cochise County and in the neighboring communities. As far as restoration work, there is a habitat boardwalk that is ADA designed, and three Hummingbird gardens sprinkled around everywhere. The riparian zone has a small amphitheater, a great opportunity to have schools come in for educational days. There are also bird watching points and a nature play area in this space.

The main entrance is a throwback to a hummingbird nest with interesting things to consider, an interactive sculpture, a Hummingbird garden, and nature play area.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Ms. Wilson stated that the Hummingbird gardens would be specific plantings and sitting spaces that would be made for attracting hummingbirds that would also naturally attract a lot of butterflies, smaller pocket areas within the space.

Wheat Design designed a natural 75-seat amphitheater that could be used for bringing somebody in and teaching about Cochise County. There could be small acoustic musicians, somebody bringing in animals and teaching classroom students, a place to gather and learn, relax, or enjoy some music.

The Habitat boardwalk was designed in a way that allows people to get close to nature, to see animals that are naturally found out in the area, and it is accessible regardless of the person's abilities because it would be wide enough for wheelchair. The water play area is also in this

area along with a habitat restoration space which could be like used as a learning tool.

Wheat Design has the water play area built up on rocks and not a traditional splash pad, but everyone would be able to get through it by walking through, riding a bicycle through, or by laying down and rolling around in the water. However, people do not have to get wet because it is designed in a mindful approach to having sensory experiences for kids and adults alike, very low water use.

There are interactive sculptures, a hummingbird nest, that people could walk through or interact with. There are also interactive LED sculptures for inspiration.

Examples of nature playgrounds were shown that float into the background and are not as bright and contrasting to the area - things that would blend into the space. Examples of nature boardwalks were also shown that allow people to experience nature while allowing access to trails available to people who would normally not be able to access them. However, this would not be an option throughout the entire space, but having an experience in a smaller area might be something to consider.

There is a high side to the park and Wheat Design was talking about water harvesting there and having the water pool into a circular stone area that would create a birdbath experience with educational placards about what they are seeing, what they are doing, and what is replicating. This could be used to educate people on all the work that is already being done in the area. The amphitheater is a stone up into the high ground that looks down into the space, a good educational opportunity.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey stated that she loves so much of it.

Council Member Landry stated that she liked the slides, loved the site analysis, the breakdown and how it was layered to show the different sections of it, and the opportunities and constraints that was helpful when going through this. She added that if she was going to pick this park for herself, she probably would pick the second one, but based on the feedback from the public, the first concept has a lot more things that would hit all the needs and wants, 75 percent of Concept I and 25 percent of Concept II would be ideal. In closing, she stated that she likes the breakdown for the metrics in both concepts regarding the number of parking spaces and the number of acres developed.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey stated that merging the two is also a possibility.

Council Member Landry stated that keeping sustainability in mind is important, especially having a low impact on the environment and the wildlife, and not messing too much with the habitat around there. She also likes the idea about water harvesting because the public loves water features as well as the hummingbird gardens to embrace that Sierra Vista is the Hummingbird Capital. Lastly, she stated that Todd Ryan shared comments about having a hummingbird statue at one of the parks, which would be a great way for people to come in and see it, take pictures, and embrace that Sierra Vista is the hummingbird capital. She then asked if there is a way to be able to food truck setups.

Mayor Pro Umphrey noted that food trucks were included in Soldier Creek Park.

Council Member Messmer stated that it is too much for her to decide.

Mayor Pro Umphrey asked if Roadrunner Park could be renamed. Ms. Wilson stated that she is unsure where Roadrunner Park came from, but the Parks and Recreation Commission is currently looking into it which will then be brought before Council for consideration on how parks and public buildings are named.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey stated that she is impressed with all the work that went into this. Wheat Design made it beautiful and easy to understand and she can envision the potential that it has now and taking note of what the public provided to try and incorporate it in different ways. She added that she is aware that it is not currently possible, but she would like cost estimates. Ms. Wilson stated that it is going to cost some money. She spoke to Laura Mielcarek leading up to this and Wheat Design is going to get some higher estimates; however, they just wanted to know if they were going in the right direction before spending a lot of time on that. Wheat Design is standing by and ready to get started as soon as they know that they are heading in the right direction, and everybody is happy, to provide the City with preliminary numbers. Once staff works through this as well, coming up with a combined design, taking these elements that will be coming before Council, staff will be able to put some numbers together and then go into the actual design phase.

Ms. Yarbrough stated that since four members are not present and there were technology issues, staff will bring this item back to the next work session for review and comment and to also give folks the time to review for some feedback to Wheat Design.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Mr. Potucek stated that there was extensive public input process, and once there is discussion, it will probably be a blend of the two concepts. He added that he is not opposed to have this posted online to get comments.

d. Report on Recent Trips, Meetings and Future Meetings

Council Member Landry reported that the Transportation Commission Meeting which is usually the first Wednesday of the month has been rescheduled due to previous commitments of some of the commissioners. Therefore, the Transportation Commission will meet on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at City Hall in the second-floor conference room at 3:30 p.m.

Council Member Messmer reported that on March 13, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. at the Oscar Yrun Community Center, the Arts, Humanities, and Culture Diversity Commission will meet. She also reported that on Monday, March 11, 2024, the Tourism Commission met and discussed that Wheat Design will be bringing a few projects forward in the next month.

e. Future Discussion Items and Council Requests

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Ms. Yarbrough stated that there will be a review of the Roadrunner concept plans at the next work session for those who could not be present to get a chance to comment, and in April, the Six-month Strategic Plan update and the first budget presentations will be presented at the work session agenda.

3. Adjourn

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey adjourned the March 12, 2024 work session of the Sierra Vista City Council at 3:56 p.m.

Carolyn Umphrey, Mayor Pro Tem

Minutes prepared by:

Attest:

Maria G. Marsh, Deputy Clerk

Jill Adams, City Clerk

A recording of the Council Meeting is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8PtUpIbkQsixlhSy-jeR_Q/videos