

Responses to questions raised at Kurt Kastein's District Meeting held on March 2, 2005.

1. Can we provide a more complete description of the road work being done on Drake between Overland Trail and Taft Hill? How much does it cost? Why is Harmony road being widened instead? Will there be a median? Is the project to underground wires on Drake in connection with this road improvement? Will it affect the citizens' yards/sidewalk?

There are a few County outparcels along the south side of Drake that were enclaved and annexed in 2003. There is also a Public Service overhead transmission line running along the south side. City Light and Power planned to take over and underground this power line in accordance with our annexation agreement. City Engineering began coordination with Light and Power to locate their utility easement in the ultimate configuration for the future roadway. Since Light and Power needed to proceed with easement acquisition for the undergrounding of the power line, we combined efforts and are acquiring the ROW at the same time.

As is standard City policy, Drake Road has been improved by development projects as they are built. The difficult part of building roads with development is that you only get the full four lane arterial when the last parcel widens out.

City staff saw this as an opportunity to finish out the four lane arterial in this one mile segment for very little cost. By doing the engineering design in house and sharing ROW acquisition costs with L&P, the preparation for this project has been done very inexpensively. The construction cost is under \$100,000 and can be done quickly without closing the roadway. The improvements consist of curb, gutter, and sidewalk, and asphalt pavement along four small parcels on the south side of Drake between Taft and Overland. They consist of a rental house, a horse farm, an RV storage yard, and one private residence. The buildings are far enough back from the street that front yards will not be affected. Just a few trees and landscaping will be relocated. There will not be a median installed with this project. The power lines are being relocated underground.

In contrast, improvements to Harmony Road are estimated to be \$7 million. The project remains on hold due to lack of funding.

2. There were comments about the steady increase in fees and taxes over the last several years. Where is the perspective when everyone is concerned about a cultural center, ballfields and streets, all of which are good, but is spending more money on these things really the answer? Citizen wants to know the taxing plan for the next 4-5 years so there is adequate planning without adding more and more taxes each election. But knowing

the future taxing plan is difficult because of changing Councils and the need for elections to approve tax increases.

Can we prepare the data that shows what our sales tax rate and utilities fees have been over time? (I'd at least like to see the data for the last 6 years - since I've been on Council. 10 would be better.) Do we also have information on how family incomes have increased for the same period, just for comparison purposes? Is there a cost of living index that the City maintains or has access to? If so, could you provide that data for the same time period?

Sales & use tax rate is and has been 3% since 1993 (2.25% general purpose; 0.75% voter approved dedicated – Building Community Choices packages).

Property tax mill levy is 9.797 mills, unchanged since 1991.

Family Incomes-Per the U.S. Census Bureau data derived from the 1990 census, the median family income for Fort Collins was \$37,491. The 2000 census reported median family income for Fort Collins as \$59,332, a 58% increase over 1990 median family income.

Fort Collins Cost of Living Index-The ACCRA (American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association) Cost of Living Index measures relative price levels for consumer goods and services in participating areas The average for all participating areas equals 100, and each participants index is read as a percentage of the average for all places. The following is the Cost of Living Index for Fort Collins.

1993	102.0
1994	107.1
1995	109.2
1996	104.6
1997	104.9
1998	103.7
1999	103.4
2000	103.7
2001	108.1
2002	101.7

It is difficult to predict the taxing plan for the next four to five years. As noted above, the *tax rate* for both sales and use taxes and property taxes (which make up the majority of resources for the City's General Fund) has not changed for many years. The revenues generated by the tax rate have increased over the years due to the growth in the City's economy. Relatedly, the need and demand for City services has also increased.

Yet, today there is a great deal of uncertainty – the outcome of the Grocery Tax Repeal measure could significantly reduce the City’s sales and use tax revenue; the health of the City’s economy (jobs; retail activity) affect revenues for City services.

As we look ahead, the key is determining how much citizens are willing to pay for their municipal services and deciding what services and at what levels can be provided at the price citizens are willing to pay.

3. What is the latest status of the Urban Renewal District legislation being proposed in the State Legislature? An opinion was offered that URD law should not allow for agricultural or greenfield acreage to be included in the district.

SB 63 deals with restricting urban renewal authorities. Currently, the bill as amended allows no more than 10% of an urban renewal area to be land that has been zoned agricultural within the last five years. The bill is before the full Senate for action and would then move to the House. The City has taken a "support" position for SB 63 as amended. The Colorado Municipal League continues to work for the bill's defeat.

4. Do City parks - neighborhood and community - need to stay open until 11pm? There were opinions raised that non-programmed activity in the park after 10pm is generally not beneficial.

Parks and Recreation staff are not aware of a pattern of misbehavior occurring in our parks between 10 and 11 in the evening. Graffiti and vandalism occurs on occasion, but in a random fashion. If we see a pattern to the misconduct, we hire a private security firm to patrol the parks to discourage it. Because we are not experiencing an increase in problems between 10 and 11 we do not see a need to close the parks at 10. Additionally, because games on lighted fields often end after 10, we need to keep the parks open until 11. This provides time for the games to end and for the teams to pack up and head home. If the parks are open for games they have to be open for drop in use as well. In general, we like to keep the parks open and available for use by the community. If we reduce the curfew to 10 it then becomes illegal to be in the parks. There are citizens who like to walk, ride their bikes or star gaze at this hour. We prefer to allow the citizens to enjoy the parks in the evenings unless there is a compelling reason to close them.

5. One citizen raised the point that he received notice of his water meter being changed out. Is this cost-effective? What if the current meter is in good working condition - does it get swapped anyway? Citizen lives on Blueleaf Court in Quail Hollow.

A water meter maintenance program is underway. Meters installed under the mandatory metering program require maintenance or replacement after 10 years to assure reasonable

accuracy. Experience shows that many of the original meters start losing accuracy after 8 to 10 years of service resulting in frustration for the customers and lost revenue to the Utilities.

Fort Collins Utilities is installing replacement meters having better accuracy and a longer average life. The replacement meters have a touch pad electronic read capability that will produce readings that are more reliable.

For customer convenience and cost efficiency, meters are replaced when scheduled even if there is no immediate evidence of failure.

For customers in Quail Hollow, meters are about 11 years old and are due for service.

**6. Chronic wasting disease testing near ponds in north Fort Collins - this seems dangerous to the City's water supply. What is City's response.**

We have been in contact with local and state regulators as well as the USEPA regarding CWD. The current opinion of these agencies is that scientific information does not show CWD to be a public health threat from waterborne transmission. We have also contacted CSU and discussed this issue with Earlie Thomas, Director of Environmental Health Services. He indicated that CSU has looked into the issue of the DOW activities on the land leased from CSU and that they are not concerned. He emphasized that they made that decision based on what is know about the disease, not based on what is not known.

**7. When will the traffic light signal system be finished?**

The initial phases of the Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS) is complete as of 12/31/2005. The project components consist of the following:

- a. State of the art Transportation Management Center
- b. Advanced centralized control system
- c. 33 miles of city-owned fiber optic communication
- d. 161 intersections changed out with new electronics
- e. 126 intersections communicating over fiber optic lines
- f. 29 intersections communicating over wireless technology
- g. 6 stand-alone intersections (not coordinated with the system)
- h. 10 system video cameras for traffic monitoring
- i. Initial timing plans have been deployed

During 2005, the Traffic Operations staff will be working diligently to review and refine all of the timing plans of the system to further improve traffic flow.

**8. Is there a federal grant writer in the City organization? Specifically, can we apply for federal grants for transportation needs?**

- Police: We have written for numerous grants, federal and state. We do not have a "professional" writer but we do have two folks who have regularly and successfully written for grants.
- CPES: Our Federal grants are the CDBG and HOME programs. We are an entitlement city so don't have to compete each year. However, there is an Administration proposal to reduce or eliminate funding. We regularly get State grants for historic preservation (\$97K this month for the Nix Farm), GOCO for open space, and for clean air programs. We do not have a staff grant writer. Program staff will focus on their area of expertise.
- Utilities: We have written a couple of grants for stormwater (FEMA) and for energy conservation efforts (Energy Star). We do not consider ourselves as grant writing experts... but we struggle along when necessary.
- Operation Services: We don't have a staff member who is the designated grant writer. Instead, we evaluate each grant request individually and do our own writing. We are notified of the grants through various sources. Mostly, however, through professional organizations and industry email lists.
- CLRS: The only federal grants in the CLRS area that I am aware of are for the Museum. We have a Museum staff person who writes these grant applications for us as part of her duties. We also apply for GOCO grants and other state agency grants. These grants are prepared by various staff members, typically with help from the Recreation communication staff. We do not have a dedicated grant writer.
- CTS: We are currently doing a limited amount of grant writing in CTS, but we expect to place additional emphasis in this area in the coming years.
  - Last year our Communications and Public Involvement group got a grant from the Bohemian Foundation to help defray the costs of producing Showcase Fort Collins in 2004. We will apply again for funding as part of their 2005 grant cycle. Our Cable 27 staff wrote the grant application.
  - We are also investigating various grant opportunities relating to improving IT system security and implement continuity of government measures. It is possible that we may be able to get of homeland security related grants in this area. Our IT Director has experience in writing grant applications and securing federal government funding for IT projects.
  - We have also been approached by ESRI, the leading private GIS software provider, to participate in a proof of concept demonstration project. While not technically a grant, ESRI is proposing to provide the City with software and consulting services to help us develop GIS related web services to support GIS integration with other enterprise applications the City utilizes. This will reduce the cost to the City of developing these projects.

- Transportation: There is no dedicated grant writer in Transportation Services. Rather, it is an ancillary function of the managers and professional staff of the various operating departments. Transportation Services can and does frequently and aggressively apply for and receive Federal funding for capital improvements and, in the case of Transfort, operation funding assistance.
  - Federal funding, however, is somewhat limited. Federal highway funding is administered by the State, and allocated according to statewide priorities. Presently, most of the funds from this source are committed to CDOT sponsored projects in other areas of the State.
  - Other Federal Sources are the CMAQ program (Congestion Management and Air Quality), STP Metro funds (Surface Transportation Program), and the FHWA Enhancement Program which has paid for many bike and ped improvements such as the bike lanes on east Harmony Road. These are all Federal funds allocated by the State Transportation Commission to the regions for distribution. In our region, CMAQ funds can only be used in the Fort Collins area for projects that serve to improve air quality through use of alternative modes or capital projects to reduce congestion. Only about \$1 million annually is available from this source. Recent uses include the City's Transportation Demand Management program, design and construction of bike and pedestrian projects, traffic signals, and minor intersection improvements.
  - STP Metro funds are distributed throughout the north front range region though the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). These are flexible as to use and have been used to fund street, transit, bike, and pedestrian projects. There is only about \$1 million per year for all the local governments in the area on a competitive basis. This year, STP funded a replacement bus and the design of a bike/ped crossing for the Mason Transportation Corridor trail at Prospect.
  - Fort Collins receives transit funding for both operations assistance, and capital projects. About \$1.3 million was granted to offset the Transfort operating costs this year. In recent years, Federal capital grant funds have also funded the Downtown Transit Center, the new CSU Transit Center, and buses and related equipment. We have been granted and accumulated more than \$8 million over the last 6 years for Phase 2 of the CSU Transit Center. It is important to note that Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds, which is the largest source of Federal funding available to Fort Collins, can ONLY be used for transit, and cannot be diverted to streets or other modes.
  - All projects for federal funding must be programmed through the MPO Regional Transportation Plan. This is an exercise conducted every three

years in which Federal funds are identified and estimated, and projects prioritized for funding. Through the City's involvement in the MPO, we are aware of the Federal funding opportunities and processes, and make effort to assure that any funding opportunity for Fort Collins is pursued.

- At Transfort/Dial-A-Ride and Transportation Demand Management, grant applications/contracts are submitted as a product of a group exercise which may include 2-6 people. One person may be responsible for gathering all the materials, but it takes more than one to generate the appropriate paperwork. Past grants have included: Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ); Surface Transportation Program (STP); Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC); Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5307, 5309, 5310, and 5311, 5313; private grant (Bohemian Foundation); and other government grants like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families-TANF and the Older Americans Act. All these funds are potentials for future resources including the FTA New Starts/Small Starts program. Transfort/DAR has received anywhere from \$400,000 to \$2.3 million annually for rolling stock and capital projects over the last eight years. They also receive \$1.3-1.5 million per year in operating revenue from FTA.
- Traffic Operations has also been extremely successful in writing grants over the past few years. They have received CMAQ, Hazard Elimination and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) grants. CMAQ and ITS grants have paid for more than \$2 million of the new Advanced Traffic Management System over the past three years.
- Transportation Planning has secured several grants to assist in funding and construction of several Transportation Service Area projects. They include \$80,000 from GOCO and \$313,000 from CDOT STP for the Mason TC, \$219,000 of CDOT Enhancement funds for the West Elizabeth Improvements, and \$465,000 of CDOT Enhancement funds for the US-287 Bike Lanes project. Transportation Planning has secured over \$2.4 million dollars in grant funding for City of Fort Collins Transportation Service Area projects since 1997.

This is a sampling of the various grant efforts in the City. Currently, we rely on the knowledge (of federal and state grant programs) and expertise of staff in the various service areas and do not have a centralized grant writing function.