

District 4 Meeting with Kurt Kastein – Issues that Affect You
Community Room, Harmony Library
4616 S. Shields Street
March 6, 2006
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Meeting Agenda:

1. Recent Council Activities
2. Future Agenda Items
3. 2007 Budget
4. Library District
5. FOP Charter Amendment
6. Your Priorities / Questions & Answers

Kurt opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with a general announcement that he is, by law, not allowed to discuss the proposed zoning change at the corner of Harmony and Shields, as it is a quasi-judicial matter that may come before City Council in the future. Were he to engage in discussions now, he would not be able to vote on the issue when it comes to City Council.

(see Powerpoint for recent Council activities and see 6-month Agenda Planning Calendar for future Council agenda items).

Many questions were addressed related to the water rates structure. Kurt Kastein noted that the Federal Government, when deciding whether or not to expand Halligan Reservoir, requires that the City of Fort Collins have measures or policies or incentives in place to encourage water conservation. Such programs include a water rate structure that makes higher users pay more, a xeriscaping option in the City Code, City-offered rebates for efficient washers/dryers, aiming public outreach efforts toward conservation, etc.

Question: for the water rates that will be discussed, does City staff consider last year's average use or the multi-year average?

Staff Response: our projections are usually based on long term or multi-year averages.

Question: What exactly is City Council going to vote upon regarding the "Clean Energy Cluster" agenda item?

Staff Response: see attached AIS for 3/21/06 City Council meeting. Also at:
<http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=72&docid=911171>

Regarding re-zoning requests, Kurt noted that they are NOT appeals to City Council but they are quasi-judicial. Council is the final decision maker.

A citizen asked if there is a second reading on re-zoning requests. Kurt Kastein directed all questions related to appeals or re-zoning requests to the City Clerk's Office as they can answer questions about the process or re-direct citizens to the appropriate department.

Question: Who (what email address) can citizens write to with their input for re-zoning requests?

Staff Response: The Project Manager for the Rezoning application is the City's Current Planning Director, Cameron Gloss. E-mail should be directed to Cameron at cgloss@fcgov.com and the message will be entered into the public record.

A citizen asked about the process for initiating open space purchases. Kurt Kastein noted that about 10 years ago, lands were identified within the City (and given a specific zoning designation), and within the region if they qualified for open space.

Kurt Kastein noted that the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the North I-25 Environmental Impact Study (EIS) were two groups discussing transit options for the region. Their websites are valuable: www.nfrmpo.org and www.dot.state.co.us/northI25eis/index.cfm.

Follow up Question: What is the total amount of fines collected annually by the Library? Why do you not have to pay the fine until it reaches \$5? Isn't that like the City loaning you \$5 with no interest charged? Wouldn't those unpaid fines add up to a large amount of revenue? Where do the fees go?

Staff Response:

1. What is the total amount of fines collected annually by the Library?

The total amount of fines collected in 2005 at the Main Library was \$75,957.14 and at Harmony Library was \$62,233.83. An additional \$54,155.90 was collected by an agency in 2005. Fines from the Harmony were and are placed in a jointly owned with the College interest bearing account to be used for equipment replacement. There is \$158,997.68 in current outstanding fines. This amount reflects an average of \$1.48 in fines per person for 107,607 patrons. There is \$671,546.55 in 8,819 outstanding collection agency accounts.

2. Why do you not have to pay the fine until it reaches \$5? Isn't that like the City loaning you \$5 with no interest charged?

Most libraries set fine limits higher than ours. Approx 5 years ago when we implemented self service checkouts, we allowed customers to owe just \$2.50 before they were blocked. We have found it more cost effective and customer friendly to raise the fine limit to \$5.00 (and it may be time to raise it again). A higher fines threshold allows greater access to and use of our self-

check machines and saves staff time collecting fees. This is one way we have been able to continue a high level of service despite cuts in the number of staff in the circulation department.

3. *Wouldn't those unpaid fines add up to a large amount of revenue? Where do the fees go?*

As noted above, part of the fines and fees go to pay for collection of the accounts and pay to replace materials lost to the collection. The remaining fines go to the General Fund. Most of the Library's \$3.7 million budget comes from the General Fund.

We found that it is most cost effective to let fines accrue to a reasonable amount because paying fines more often increases the need for staff to process the transactions. Staff salaries are the library's largest expense. If we collected fines as they accrued, the high use of self checkout machines would drop off and the staff needed to service these accounts would increase. We are at about 60% of our transactions being done as self service thereby saving salary costs and avoiding longer lines at checkout. The library checks out 2.2 million items each year.

Kurt noted that if the City starts a library user fee, then the Fort Collins libraries would not be allowed to exchange books with other libraries in the region. This would be detrimental in the long run as we do borrow from many other libraries.

Open Q&A:

Police

Regarding the Southwest Annexation issue, citizens commented that if Police are already stretched thin (due to not adding additional officers in the City budget), won't the problem get worse with an annexation? One citizen noted that it took 40 minutes for Police to respond to their call when a 1-year old toddler wandered down the sidewalk on Taft Hill late at night. Kurt Kastein clarified that City police do respond to calls in the Southwest Annexation area right now, since they can't take time to determine in an emergency if the address is located in the City limits or not. Likewise, Larimer County Sheriffs often respond to City calls where it is not immediately obvious if the caller is in the City limits or not. Since this already occurs, the level of the policing would have more funding to do a lot of what they're already doing. Some citizens noted that on non-emergency calls from the Southwest Annexation area, the City Police adamantly refuse to help.

Kurt noted that Police Services Strategies are coming up for the next budget cycle. He and City Council need to know what is lost when 6 new officers are not added annually. Kurt mentioned the \$35 ticket surcharge that now applies to traffic citations helps to pay for 2 traffic enforcement officers.

A citizen commented that School Resource Officers should not be in the schools (merely serving the best interest of only the school employees), but should be out on the street performing City safety business. He thinks that it is absurd that when a high school student receives a ticket on a Sunday night at the mall, that ticket is referred to the School Resource Officer.

Kurt noted that it costs somewhere around \$90,000 to train a police officer so we want to retain them as much as possible.

Question: What does the \$90,000 go towards for the training of an officer? Why does it cost so much?

Kurt also noted that we have only 5 traffic enforcement officers. The rest of the 95-100 sworn officers don't often write traffic tickets since they are focusing on other priorities. This could explain why citizens who run a red light in full view of a police car are not pulled over. Citizens think that marked Police cars should respond or else they are essentially doing no good to take their cars home at night. Kurt noted that it is often a balancing act between competing priorities.

A citizen asked where is the data that supports the need for more traffic enforcement? Kurt noted that we have a Benchmark Survey which compares Fort Collins to 19 similar cities in areas such as crime rate, closure rate, etc. While our crime rate is admirable, our closure rate is deficient. Thus, in the future, the crime rate could rise as criminals figure out that they may not be caught. City Council is asking for the Police Department to put together a strategy—what is working well, what is not working well, so that can be evaluated in the next budget cycle.

Staff Response: The vast majority of the costs are salary costs for the officers as they go through the Academy, 2 salaries as they go through the 13 week field training program, and salary during our in-house academy. There are costs for instruction and built-in overtime. Also, equipment costs are factored in as well.

Question: How can a citizen read/obtain a copy of the Police Benchmark Survey? (is it on the website?)

Staff Response: The benchmark survey is not a published document. Copies are provided to the City Manager and the Council, and as it is very lengthy and costly to reproduce, the Police do not have a provision for making it available to the general public at this time. Additionally, as it is somewhat technical in nature, the document requires some interpretation.

A citizen asked a question, "Can the Truck Bypass funds collected a few years ago be re-directed to address the City's general fund shortfall?" Kurt said no, since those were monies specifically approved under Building Community Choices in 1997 by a citizen initiative. They are allocated by ordinance and cannot be spent elsewhere unless re-allocated by voters. The goal with the Truck Bypass study is to deviate trucks making deliveries to Fort Collins from driving down Riverside/Jefferson Street in the heart of historic Old Town. One option was to put the route 2 miles north of Vine Drive.

Emergency Management Response Plan

The City has an Emergency Management Response update scheduled to come to City Council.
What is involved in that? Will the Council address what happens if we have a bird flu

outbreak? Kurt noted that City staff shares what is currently in place and the Council can ask questions and make recommendations about what they'd like to see.

***Staff Response:** The scheduled presentation by Emergency Management at the April 11th City Council work session will include an brief overview of Emergency Management principles and details how Fort Collins utilizes those principles to prepare and respond to major emergencies and disasters. This update will also include a briefing on the status of bird flu planning in the community. This presentation also gives the City Council some direction in how they will fit into the emergency response activities. After the presentation, Q & A from City Council is expected. The Work Session is open for public viewing but not public input.*

Open Space

Question: is there a way/policy/list of instructions on how to start a citizen initiative regarding open space? Where can a citizen obtain that information?

***Staff Response:** All guidelines for the initiative process can be retrieved at fcgov.com/cityclerk/initiativegdlns.php or by calling the City Clerk's office at 970-221-6515.*

8:45 p.m. meeting adjourned.

Additional Citizen questions from sign-in sheets

Item #34: "Potential traffic on Regency from proposed development."

***Staff Response:** A Traffic Study has not been completed for the rezoning request. Traffic studies are performed at the time of the development application. However, we know that whatever the development that occurs at the site, access from Harmony and Shields will be limited. It is likely that the main access (full movement) will occur at Regency thereby increasing the traffic volumes along this street.*

Item #35: "traffic on S. Taft and 38E, double lines and no turn lane for people living in mobile home parks."

***Staff Response:** In late Spring 2006 construction will begin on a project to widen S. Taft Hill between Harmony and Horsetooth. The widening will include a new center turn lane which will address access to the Mobile home parks adjacent to Taft Hill. The project is funded by the County regional impact fees and administered by the City of Fort Collins. The work will be completed in Fall 2006.*