

MEADVILLE CITY COUNCIL
Study Session Meeting
February 13, 2024

Call to Order	The in-person study session of the City Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Jaime Kinder. Deputy Mayor McKnight and Councilmembers Gretchen Myers, Jim Roha, and Autumn Vogel answered on the call of the roll. Staff present were City Manager Maryann Menanno, Finance Director Tim Groves, City Planner Peter Grella, Community Development Director Renna Wrubleski, and Recording Secretary Darla Boca.
Public Comment of Agenda Items	None
Approve Minutes	Deputy Mayor McKnight moved to approve minutes from the February 6, 2024, Regular Council meeting. Councilmember Myers seconded. The roll call was unanimous.
Old Business Staff Report/Discussion – Parking Town Hall	<p>Ms. Menanno turned the discussion over to City Planner Grella. Mr. Grella began by thanking all the members of council for attending the Parking Town Hall held on January 23rd at the Meadville Public Library. Wanted to correct an error, due to a formula, that was in the presentation – the accumulated losses for 2000 to 2022 was not correct. This has been updated in the presentation that is on the Meadville website. Another point is that the parking garage is fully rented, not utilized, meaning that the rental spaces are at full occupancy. There are 30+ spaces that are metered for visitor use. Councilmember Roha asked if the tarps that are used to prevent rust from falling onto vehicles caused spaces to go unused. Mr. Grella indicated that the spaces are available, but vehicles had to be relocated while the tarps were installed. He encouraged Council to visit the structure and look up to see the concerns of deterioration. Waiting for a full conditions report for Porter Consulting Engineers, should have that by March.</p> <p>Mr. Grella continued that he had direct communication with 3 members of the community following the town hall – 1 phone call to discuss the punitive process for parking fines. 1 business owner that had concerns that if the parking rate was increased that there would be an increase in trespassing of those using private parking spaces versus paying for the meter. 1 member of the business community stated that they had no concern about the rates. Mr. Grella asked Council to share with him any interactions that they have with the public so he could track all comments and concerns. This way he can prepare professional opinions depending on what Council wants to do moving forward or if they prefer to wait until the report is returned from PCE. Deputy Mayor McKnight stated that Council should wait until the report is returned. Councilmember Vogel added that waiting on the data from PCE would be important in setting plan to move forward. Then the expectation can be set for public input, early on in the decision process. Mayor Kinder added that a study to look into ideas – going up, going free, should also be addressed. Mr. Grella indicated that marginal concessions could be made. Public utilization of the EZ parking app, color coding meters that extended time available on them, signage and wayfinding markers to the public lots. There really isn't any advertising of the lots.</p> <p>Councilmember Myers also added the option of ½ hour timed meters for those that are just visiting a location for a quick minute should be looked at.</p>

	<p>Ms. Menanno indicated that all the meters the city has can be set for any time limits.</p> <p>Councilmember Roha had a homeowner tell him “Don’t even think about raising property taxes to subsidize downtown parking.” Mr. Grella stated that is what was good about the town hall, the public gets to see the compromises and discussions, that it can get a little dirty in trying to for the optimal cost for the community. Need to get to nearest we can for the best answer for everyone.</p> <p>Mayor Kinder asked if there could be wayfinding signs, perhaps on Google to share with visitors where to park. She had spoken to a business, and they are always being asked by their customers where to park – the business directs their customers to the Diamond. Though, some people who are first time visitors may not even know what or where the Diamond is.</p> <p>Councilmember Roha stated that there needs to be an overall strategy, discussing whether metered time should end by 5 versus 5:30 or 6pm. It would encourage people to visit restaurants for the evening. Ms. Wrubleski added that this was discussed at the MIBA meeting, especially when they have events planned, such as First Friday. Mr. Grella also indicated that reserved parking is from 6am to 6pm, that after 6pm those spots may be used by visitors. Councilmember Vogel said that there is no magic wand to solution but that incremental changes would help. Such as signage, Meter EZ.</p> <p>Mayor Kinder encouraged some marketing on the City website, such as the reserved being available after 6pm.</p> <p>Mr. Grella asked if there was signage at Diamond Park. Ms. Menanno indicated “No”, that there was some rationale provided by Public Works director as to why there wasn’t. Mr. Grella added that what we take for granted doesn’t fit for those that may be visiting for the first time.</p> <p>Mr. Grella asked for Council’s top 3 ideas that he could work on.</p> <p>Mayor Kinder – education</p> <p>Councilmember Vogel – 1 way on Chestnut, \$.25 for ½ hour parking, parking signage.</p> <p>Councilmember Roha – review why 5:30 vs 5:00 to end metering/enforcement. Mr. Groves answered that was meant for employment of the enforcement officer – could finalize the day and be back to finish work. Councilmember Myers added to find best locations for ½ hour meters.</p> <p>Councilmember Vogel spoke of a good experience had by enforcement officer Lindy – that she worked to show someone at the meter how to use MeterEz. Mr. Grella noted that for the public to yell at the enforcement officers, it’s unacceptable. Lindy is just enforcing the policy. If someone has questions/concerns they need to be brought to Council or to him directly.</p> <p>A discussion about the Meter EZ app followed with questions being brought up as to how if someone loads money into the app that enforcement knows that vehicle has paid. And can the max 2 hours per meter be enforced. Ms. Menanno indicated that the application utilizes the license plate, not the meter and that the 2-hour warning can be built into the program so a visitor couldn’t just stay at that meter.</p>
--	--

<p>Staff Report/Discussion – Housing Plan</p>	<p>Ms. Wrubleski presented the Housing Action Plan proposed timeline noting that the first public presentation of the draft was presented to the Planning Commission on February 1st. There was no discussion at that time. The remainder of the timeline showed that City Council received the plan on February 13th. The RDA meeting on February 14th would allow for plan review and feedback. Two Regular Council meetings – February 20th and March 5th would allow for feedback and public input. On March 7th the Planning Commission will be able to review and provide feedback. On March 12th at the Council Study Session, staff would synthesize all feedback and present to Council to review and discuss. Then as early as the March 19th Regular Council meeting, the plan could come before Council with a resolution to adopt. Council could solicit public input between now and March 12th.</p> <p>Mayor Kinder asked if we had time to prepare for a town hall to get feedback from the public. Ms. Wrubleski indicated that it would depend on Council as to what the input period is. If not a town hall, an open house, drop-in sessions to learn about the plan. Discussion with people as well as focus groups at the housing organizations to talk about. Also, a feedback survey could be done, if Council decided to do that. Then, if need be, figure out another timeline.</p> <p>Mayor Kinder – I don't want the staff to be overwhelmed.</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleski – it's not really doing extra.</p> <p>Councilmember Roha – There is no indication of the amount of staff time or the cost to complete this.</p> <p>Councilmember Vogel – The timeline looks good. The process by which we develop the plan is open, we don't want to slow it down. Need to educate the public. How quickly after passage and we begin. The process has been public.</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleski – to Jim's question, we didn't put percentages. Seeing the plan as redevelopment versus housing, it was intentionally set that way. Staff feel it is the best way for the city to directly input. Can gain partnerships and support with quality of housing. RDA can intervene more. The job is working with the RDA. Already spending time but now the time spent will have clarity and focus. And at this time will not need to draw on additional resources. Ms. Menanno added that it would become part of her job duties and provide direction for the RDA.</p> <p>Councilmember Vogel stated her concern that it would be a lot for the RDA, were they ok with what this entails?</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleski answered that Dennis (Frampton) was part of the design committee. Also, Jim Miale and Jan VanTuil gave directions for the RDA. The ownership of housing shared structure with RDA. As to what the City owns, what we can do, the end use of the property, the different pots of money that will set the foundation for the timeline. For operational readiness to take on larger RDA projects. It's not real glamorous, it's getting our ducks in a row to do the work.</p> <p>Finance Director Groves indicated that the RDA pays the City a fair admin fee Renna and Peter's time.</p> <p>Councilmember Myers asked about the small projects – who determines? Ms. Wrubleski answered it is a partnership program. RDA's blight fund – outside people can't apply for blight funds. Why couldn't it be open to those outside the RDA? Have a City program that is opened up to those within what the RDA is already developing – maybe help with some demolition costs – as a broad concept, but a way to dip into this work. Small developers</p>
---	---

	<p>that don't have as much money for investment, like larger developers, ask what other resources the City has for them to utilize. Really nothing other than offering the property at a very cheap price. And when we are acquiring properties, we will have a list of developers that we can send an RFP to. Councilmember Vogel said this will help us to stay specific and focused. It is clear that the housing need is big, what the goals are and a good roadmap for getting things down. The vacancy rate for Meadville is higher than the state and nation. We need to put to use what we have.</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleski indicated that those numbers are from the American Community Survey. Councilmember Vogel stated that the numbers do not line up with the registry. Mr. Grella stated that not all are compliant with getting information back so must also rely on the US Census Bureau for data. Councilmember Roha asked how key partners are identified. Mr. Grella responded through a steering committee that puts together a list of partners. Councilmember Meyers asked if the high vacancy rate allows us to get more money? Ms. Wrubleski responded that is part of the plan and will make a huge difference in grants/programs we would qualify for. If we are applying for a grant, we will have a plan that shows a demonstrative need. If a non-profit is applying, they can utilize our plan for data on their grants as well. Councilmember Vogel appreciated the clear, easy to read plan. We've made sense of it, people just need to go and do it.</p>
<p>New Business</p> <p>Staff Report/Discussion – WalkWorks Grant</p>	<p>City Planner, Peter Grella stated that the Active Transportation Information Session held on February 12th was well attended with approximately 40 people, the projector worked as it was borrowed from the library. He shared a map for Council to review. This map showed notes of what the public shared during the session. Written feedback will be put together at which time input will be requested.</p> <p>Mr. Grella asked that Council assemble their thoughts over the next week and at the next meeting give ideas. Has one month to get an application together to submit. This is a reimbursement grant with no cash match needed by the City. Would know in June if the grant is received. Will need to have an action plan for 2025 as well. The steering committee for this must have at least one member of City Council. After discussion, Councilmember Myers agreed to be part of that steering committee. Mr. Grella indicated that with the resolution, implementation to begin as soon as there is a commitment of resources to the project. Need to be prepared with what, when how those resources will be.</p> <p>Council was unanimous in moving forward with the application by March 12th.</p> <p>Councilmember Vogel stated need to look at what is realistic with the money – policy versus infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Mr. Grella finished by saying we need to plan not dream.</p>
<p>Public Comment on Agenda Items</p>	<p>None</p>

Adjournment	With no further business to come before Council, Councilmember Roha moved to adjourn. Deputy Mayor McKnight seconded, and the roll call was taken to adjourn at 7:08 p.m. The roll call vote was unanimous.
--------------------	---

Maryann Menanno, Interim City Clerk

Jaime Kinder, Mayor