

Lisa,

This message provides responses to the most recent questions raised about the P&DS Advisors' group that staff has convened on a periodic basis since 2006. I will note up front that while the information presented by staff at these meetings has not involved specific development proposals, I do understand the concerns that have been raised in the context of development activity in Boulder and that diverse perspectives exist about this community's evolution. As background, I will provide some context for how these meetings got started and then address the questions that have been identified.

To obtain an independent assessment of how primary employers view “doing business in Boulder,” the city hired business consultant Ray Wilson in 2005 (and again in 2007) to conduct interviews and report his findings to City Council and staff. The assessment indicated that the city’s development processes (land use, technical document and building permit) were factors that impacted primary employers.

In November 2005, the Planning Director and I met with the Boulder Economic Council (BEC) to discuss the issues that were identified in that assessment and provide an update on initiatives recently implemented. The BEC appreciated the update and supported the concept of more routinely meeting so that an on-going communication link could be established. We asked who would be interested in attending such a meeting and developed a list of group participants based upon a show of hands. We supplemented the list by adding advisory board members and neighborhood representatives and contacted those designated to confirm their availability and interest. With regard to the latter, with development at the time focused around the downtown, we included representatives from the Whittier and Goss Grove neighborhoods.

The first meeting of the group was held on April 5, 2006. I was at that meeting and provided an overview of the Planning and Public Works Departments and highlighted the service area and fund known as “Planning & Development Services.” Revenues and expenditures were summarized along with 2005 activity levels. Updates on recent initiatives, including the services provided on-line were highlighted. Staffing updates were also provided along with the work program which included an update on the “Land Use Code Simplification Project” by the Land Use Review Manager. Following the staff presentations, meeting participants were asked to provide feedback on what was working and where further improvements were needed relative to business processes. Feedback covered a range of topics such as Inclusionary Zoning, tenant finishes, Plant Investment Fee calculations, Technical Document Review and utility locations and street tree conflicts.

To date, there have been 20 meetings of this group.

Questions and Answers

- 1. First, I am surprised to learn, as a long-time council member, that this group even exists. I do not recall being informed of its existence. What other "advisory" groups exist in the city? Why has not council been informed of these groups? How many are there?*

Response: I joined the city of Boulder organization in 1990 as an Assistant Director of Public Works. One of the first meetings I attended was that of a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). That meeting and those that followed involved discussions between staff and community members, including developers and their representatives, about inefficiencies in the development review and building permit processes. I do not know the number, but I have participated in various working groups, task forces and advisory committees over the years that have been convened to tackle specific initiatives and projects. Since basic city "operations" constitute a major piece of city resource allocation, and the organization's work ethic is that there is always room to improve service delivery, city staff have found it beneficial to actively engage customers in order to share information about what we are doing to improve services and programs and better understand what others think about proposed changes.

Examples of when Council has been informed of the P&DS Advisors' are attached and include:

- 2008 Agenda Item - Compatible Development (page 21)
 - 2009 Agenda Item - Construction Use Tax (pages 5 and 6)
 - 2009 Agenda Item - Development-Related Fee Changes (page 38)
 - 2013 Agenda Item - Critical Facilities (page 5)
2. *Second, staff responds that: As mentioned previously, P&DS Advisors are a customer / stakeholder group that is convened by staff on a quarterly basis. The group was originally formed as part of the efforts to better integrate the city's services related to the development process over ten years ago when the Planning and Development Services Center was created. The group's mission is to: ".. advise the P&DS management team on administrative improvements to the development review, technical document, building permit and inspection processes. Meetings provide the opportunity for customers to offer suggestions about improvements and provide feedback on changes proposed by staff."*

Key word here is "stakeholder" and how it is defined. Stakeholder: a person, group, or organization that has interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives, and policies.

I remember over 20 years ago arguing the term stakeholders when north Boulder planning attempts were underway in the early 1990's. At first, only property owners of large parcels, developers, architects, and others associated with development/redevelopment were considered to be the only stakeholders. The residents argued successfully and rightly so that residents indeed were the primary stakeholders given the fact that the number of residents potentially affected is several orders of magnitude greater than the "seated" stakeholders and had several orders of magnitude greater investment collectively invested in their properties, etc. So I am amazed that still after all these years of arguing who should be included in that term, staff still does not consider residents to be stakeholders. This has to change.

Response: The next P&DS Advisors' meeting is being scheduled during the first quarter of 2015. We will select a meeting location, such as the "flex-space" of the Council Chambers, to support a broad group of stakeholders and provide public notice. Additionally, as you know from the 2015 Budget process, the city will be hiring a new neighborhood liaison. That position will assist our public engagement efforts, especially with neighborhoods. We anticipate that additional methods for facilitating communication with stakeholders will be undertaken in the future.

3. *Third, should not the tax-paying residents of Boulder be considered the city's primary customers? Residents pay hard-earned taxes for city services, right?*

Response: Residents pay taxes and customers pay fees for services. We support many customers and stakeholders and strive to be inclusive.

4. *Fourth, staff states: "We maintain a list of customers who have expressed interest in participating in these meetings. We send out emails in advance to confirm the meeting date and time. We meet in the community room of Alfalfa's."*

How have these meetings been noticed? How do people learn that these meetings exist, in case they may want to attend? Many residents have expressed long-time interests in the space developed in our public realm. Key word here is PUBLIC.

Response: As noted, the next meeting of this group is being scheduled during the first quarter. The date will depend on public meeting space availability and the meeting will be open to all who wish to attend. A meeting notice will be posted on the City Calendar for this and all future meetings.

5. *Fifth, "The meetings are not considered public meetings and are neither noticed nor recorded. Staff maintain notes of meetings and structure agendas to focus on topics of potential interest and we provide general updates, such as the status of filling vacant staff positions." Since city staff is attending these meetings and I assume are being paid their salaries (paid for by the taxpayers) during these meetings, why would these meetings not be considered public? Certainly a group of 40+ individuals is large enough to be public. Certainly interested members of the public should be able to attend these meetings.*

When was the last meeting? What was the topic(s) of discussion? Please send City Council members notes and agenda structure of the meetings from the past year so we are able to understand more about this group.

Response: Moving forward, these meetings will be considered public meetings and noticed accordingly using the City Calendar. Additional notice can also be provided by email. The most recent meeting occurred on October 22, 2014. The meeting included updates on the Oct.

14, 2014 Joint Study Session (on Planning Issues and the BVCP) and the 2015 Budget Process. Meeting agendas and notes for the three meetings in 2014 are attached along with available information from meetings in 2011 - 2013.

6. *Sixth, "As you may recall, the city is in the process of replacing several key systems including its development tracking software. Stakeholder feedback has been used to inform the business process updates that relate to that software replacement. Additionally, the city's website and GIS systems support all customers and have been updated and improved in response to customer feedback. In particular, staff is working to roll out a more effective online tool/map for the public on current development review projects."*

This is all good and I am certain our interested residents also could provide important feedback that would additionally inform improvement to our key systems. I would like to see the rest of Councilmember Young's questions answered in detail:

1. *how are advisors selected? Who selects them?*
2. *What kind of business and/or process improvements/suggestions have resulted from these meetings?*

Is the list provided by Charles Ferro the most current? I notice Kirsten Snobeck is listed as the liaison to Landmarks Board yet she no longer serves on that board. When is the next meeting scheduled?

I request Council discuss the role of this group at our upcoming retreat under planning issues.

Response: We are in the process of confirming a location and date for the next meeting that will be held during the first quarter of 2015. This topic will be scheduled for City Council discussion at its January 20, 2015 meeting. As noted under the background section, participants initially self-selected and staff supplemented group participants by adding representatives from Boards and neighborhoods. Anyone that has asked to attend has been welcomed. No one has been turned away. We do need to update the list. Examples of the changes that have been implemented as a result of feedback from this group include those listed under the response to question 1.

With regard to the most recent question about why Planning Board members are not on this group, the role of Planning Board can involve making recommendations on land use regulations in addition to discretionary review of projects. It seemed most appropriate for staff to inform the full Planning Board about the public feedback obtained on proposed code changes, including the feedback offered from this group, in order to support their deliberations and potential recommendations to Council.

Thank you for your questions. I hope that the information and examples presented above are helpful and illustrate how feedback from this group has been used and previously shared in

public documents. As noted, the next meeting of this group is being scheduled and will be open to the public and noticed accordingly.

Best wishes as we begin 2015.

Maureen Rait
Executive Director of Public Works