

## City Manager's Report

August 14, 2020

Council and Colleagues, Greetings.

These reports will be included in the City Council packet for regularly scheduled Council meetings, excluding Work Session meetings. The reports are intended to be informational, covering miscellaneous events and topics involving the City organization. In no particular order...

### **Misc. Department Updates**

#### Sustainability Section

Staff continue to receive responses to our Community Forum question: Imagine it is 2030 and Flagstaff is carbon neutral. What actions did we take to get there? [Link available here](#). Through a partnership with NAU's Climate Science and Solutions program, a student completed research on the potential carbon sequestration strategies to aid in achieving the City's carbon neutrality goal.

Updated FUTS signs highlighting adopting parties have been made. We are partnering with Arizona Conservation Corps to complete the installation of signposts along Flagstaff Urban Trails.

The Open Spaces Commission discussed the Veterans' Home and is concerned about the request to use some Open Space on McMillan Mesa for additional stormwater drainage. Much effort at the staff level occurred subsequently and an alternative plan was developed whereby the stormwater discharge could be managed on the ten-acre parcel subject to the new facility. The riprap infrastructure on the open space will be removed and the land returned to its previous condition.

Stage one fire restrictions are in effect. In partnership with the fire department, signage has been placed on open spaces to alert the public.

The Picture Canyon Working Group and open space staff are working with the Festival of Science to hold a self-guided tour at Picture Canyon for the public. This effort will provide the community with new information and engaging videos about the Preserve that can be accessed from home or during a walk.

A grant application to AZ Department of Forestry & Fire Management was submitted to remove invasive species at Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve and along the Rio de Flag. If awarded, the grant would treat over 300 acres.

Staff continue to make improvements to the recycling infrastructure downtown to reduce contamination, complementing the expanded use of right of way (EUROW) project. Enclosures have been installed to limit recyclables collected to bottles and cans. Temporary stickers have been added to the residential carts placed throughout the Heritage Square area and staff are working on new signage that emphasizes that take-out waste (other than bottles and cans) is not recyclable.

### Capital Projects Update

Attached to this Report you will find the August update for Capital Projects. It is very informative and will provide you with the current status of numerous projects. Please note the following which will supplement two of those projects.

With respect to Coconino Estates Improvements (Item #13 in the attached update), there are two items to note. First, with respect to the recent questions and comments related to the mature trees on Beal Street, the City staff will endeavor to consult a professional arborist to assist in the evaluation of a slightly modified pedestrian infrastructure design that may enable the preservation of one of the two trees in question. Stay tuned on this. Second, a meeting occurred on site to address the current staging of construction materials related to the Coconino Estates Improvement Project at the old Public Works facility at Thorpe Park. Concerns were stated related to the unsightliness of the staging facility. The area is fenced but not screened. Efforts are now underway to screen it, and hopefully remove those staged items that are not needed for the project (spoils). Additionally, and with assistance from Sustainability, we will be placing signage at the storage yard that advises passersby of the eventual development of this parcel for park and community purposes, subject to community vetting.



With respect to the Fir Street Waterline Project (Item #17 in the attached update), there is one item to note. A site visit to the neighborhood at San Francisco and Fir was prompted by concerns from the neighborhood related to impact from the construction and specifically a staging area at the Elks Lodge facility that included a rock crushing operation. This staging area, similar to the one being used at the old Public Works facility as noted above, is subject to a Temporary Use Permit. The Permit did not include reference to rock crushing and efforts were immediately taken to cease that particular operation. The staging area will also be fenced and monitored to ensure that the impact upon the neighborhood is minimized. Notes from the meeting, orchestrated by our Mayor, and a photo, are noted below:



General takeaways:

- Neighbors expressed very clearly, and emphatically, their discontent with the City related to the oversight of this project, noting (1) lack of responsiveness to questions and complaints by City staff; (2) lack of communication and transparency with respect to overall impact to the neighborhood; and (3) lack of oversight of contractor. Other concerns were expressed regarding the apparent import/export of materials involving the second site operated by the contractor, with suspicions that the contractor was profiting from this arrangement at the neighborhood's expense. The neighbors expressed an eroding sense of trust toward the City regarding these projects. There was discussion about having more public awareness of these projects and their justification.

- The Mayor spoke of the need for the City to be more transparent and engaging with neighborhoods that are impacted through these projects, noting that the projects are imperative for the City. The Mayor was appreciative of staff response to shut down the crushing operation and meet with the neighborhood. The Mayor noted that the rock crushing operation, and the apparent exchange of materials at two construction sites by the contractor, were not acceptable.
- City Engineer Rick Barrett provided the necessary background for the project, noting that it will occur until October. Discussion of future pipeline extensions was also had, without certain dates referenced. Apologies by Rick were shared with the neighbors.
- Mr. Clifton noted that measures would be taken to ensure that the staging area would be returned to previous condition at the conclusion of the current project. Efforts to enhance City communications and outreach related to similar projects would be taken. The City would do a better job of being responsive to concerns and complaints by the neighbors.

Specific takeaways:

- There needs to be more City presence at the site monitoring the operations, the contractor, and the impact of the project as it moves forward. More effort needs to be taken to mitigate dust and disturbance. The contractor needs to be carefully monitored for compliance.
- The staging site needs to be fenced...kids are accessing the site and there are attractive nuisances there that present a hazard.
- No more rock crushing. Any additional material needed for the project will be imported and not crushed on site. Note: There was discussion about the rock crushing operation not being referenced in the permit, and that this operation is in violation of zoning allowances. Representatives from the Elks Lodge claimed that they were not aware of the crushing operation. This is a central issue for the neighbors.
- Increased public notice needs to occur regarding these projects in the future. Many neighbors who live in proximity to the construction area and staging site were upset that they had no notice like the neighbors who were close to the project.

**Update re payment to Southside Community Association**

I have had communications with Ms. Deb Harris, Executive Director for the Southside Community Association (SCA), subsequent to the requested funding document that was forwarded to the City Council in late July. The letter is pasted below for convenience.

Council may recall that the FY2020-21 Budget was approved with the supplemental appropriation of funds to the SCA in partnership for efforts related to investing in our African American/Black community. The immediate efforts involve the conductance of six (6) community meetings focused on specific needs of the Black community in Flagstaff. The City will be advancing \$49,708 of the requested funds toward the initiation of this partnership. The funding will be subject to a revised budget, currently being formulated by the SCA, which is working with a collaborative of numerous non-profit and church organizations. A contract will be provided by our Legal Department. Stay tuned on this.



July 21, 2020

**“Toward a Strategic Framework for Truth, Justice and Racial Reconciliation”**

Dear Mayor Evans, Flagstaff City Manager and Flagstaff City Council Members:

The Southside Community Association is excited to be in partnership with the City of Flagstaff and look forward to the ongoing work with the City on this partnership and investment in our African American/Black community, the first investment of this kind.

Flagstaff has always been a trailblazer in initiatives and programs that further the quality of life not only for our residents, but for others throughout our state. Some examples include (first city in Arizona to respond to COVID-19 with the closing of public establishments, first to create a water resource protection plan, and the first city in Arizona to desegregate our school system). In light of this, and in light of recent events and activities, this is an important investment in the ongoing development and engagement of both Flagstaff's Black community, the Flagstaff community as a whole, and the state of Arizona. We have developed a coalition in partnership with the work presented to Council in June, with SCA as the lead agency.

As previously noted in our June presentation to Council, we will be conducting six (6) community meetings focused on specific needs of the Black community in Flagstaff. We will be conducting a RARE assessment, including a community assessment, evaluation, reporting, and documentation. We will be doing a literature review regarding the Black Lived Experience in Flagstaff, and continuing a currently thriving program of biweekly short talks highlighting various aspects of the Black Lived Experience. Within a year we will have crafted this work into a strategic plan that can be presented to City Council that will provide a current community assessment, suggested actions, and areas of opportunity for their consideration. The total budget as attached is estimated at **\$182,000**. The work will be a hybrid model due to COVID-19, utilizing technology as reflected in the budget.

We look forward to working with you on what we think is an opportunity for Flagstaff to continue being a “trailblazer”. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Deborah A. Harris*

Deborah Harris,  
Executive Director  
Southside Community Association

**Southside Community Association**  
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Community Center

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### **Update re Motoya building RFP**

The RFP has been posted and the City staff is moving forward with this exciting project. The original RFP was revised to specifically tailor the scope of services to that specified by the Council. To note, the language includes the following:

*“The purpose of this RFP is to select a non-profit organization that will provide a community benefit to Flagstaff and the surrounding neighborhood so long as it is for a recreational, park, and/or education use with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, arts, and/or mathematics (STEAM). The operational use of the building by the organization is expected to be accessible and available to the public.”*

### **Update re leases**

Under Dan Folke’s direction, we met with the Murdoch Community. Mr. Folke is putting a meeting together with Kevin Fincel, Sara Dechter, Bryce Doty, myself, and perhaps others, to discuss the process and potential terms of a long-term lease. We will be pursuing a similar meeting and methodology related to Theatrikos, Inc.

It is further envisioned that this lease template will work for the **Montalvo** building lease, referenced directly above.

### **Mountain Line Request for Letter of Support**

In a quarterly meeting with Heather Dalmolin from Mountain Line, there were numerous updates provided. The transit services is running at about 40% of normal service, and currently with no service along Route 10. The fare loss stemming from the free ridership is estimated to be about \$250K. The CARES funding assistance has helped significantly.

The Downtown Connection Center is going well and environmental clearances are pending. Stay tuned. The Rapid Transit project is on hold pending the ADOT Milton Corridor. There was a recent electric bus demo...the implementation of an electric bus fleet will require additional charging infrastructure which could occur in connection with the DCC project noted above.

There is also a bus storage facility being considered in joint effort with NAU. This would enable the parking and storage of about ten buses on campus and greatly reduce costs and fuel, and possibly serve as charging station as well.

Mountain Line is advocating for FTA transit funding related to a pending application. The below letter encapsulates the major points. The application contains two projects and both have benefits for Mountain Line and the City.

The first project is a shared use transit facility for Mountain Line and Campus Shuttle, to be constructed on NAU campus, as noted above. If the project is funded, NAU will provide the required local match and Mountain Line will receive the grant funds.

The second project is comprised of several technology projects that will improve data systems and operations. If the project is funded, Mountain Line will use transit tax as the local match and will receive the funds. These projects are already in the work plan and if successful with federal funding, Mountain Line can reduce the amount of local tax needed to fund these items.

August 5, 2020

Mr. Gregory Byres, Division Director  
Arizona Department of Transportation  
Multimodal Planning Division  
206 S 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue (300B)  
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Mr. Byres:

I am writing in support of Mountain Line/NAIPTA's grant application for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307/5339 funds through the Arizona Department of Transportation's Multimodal Planning Division for two essential transit projects: 1) Bus Storage Facility on Northern Arizona University (NAU) Campus; 2) Mountain Line Technology Upgrades. This application supports City of Flagstaff's Council Goals, which focus on a livable community and environmental stewardship. In addition, City of Flagstaff's City Council voted on June 23, 2020 to move forward in declaring a climate emergency in Flagstaff. This resolution sets a goal of making Flagstaff carbon neutral by 2030.

The City of Flagstaff is a Mountain Line/NAIPTA partner agency and is committed to providing quality transit in Flagstaff. NAU's student population has grown 69 percent since its 2006 Flagstaff Campus population of 13,443. This growth is directly linked to Mountain Line's continued growth in ridership and further solidifies transit as critical infrastructure for both campus and the greater community.

- Funding will support the construction of a bus storage facility on NAU's campus. Last year, Mountain Line/NAIPTA was awarded \$1.1 million in Section 5307/5339 federal funds for design of this facility but was not awarded the construction money at that time. This application reapplies for the construction of that project. The new facility will be fully secured and have indoor bus storage, office space, maintenance bays, and a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) test course.
- Funding will also support a technology upgrade package for Mountain Line/NAIPTA. These technology upgrades will be necessary for Mountain Line/NAIPTA to improve service efficiency, safety and reliability for their customers.

Funding these projects will ensure the continued success of transit in Flagstaff and help reach the City's goals. I strongly support Mountain Line/NAIPTA's grant request and urge you to fund these important priorities for this growing and successful transit system in accordance with all rules, regulations and laws.

Sincerely,

Additionally, Mountain Line is seeking City support in advocacy to both House and Senate members on the reauthorization package (INVEST Act). Some key points to underscore the importance of this reauthorization are excerpted from a communication from Ms. Dalmolin:

- *Bus and Bus Facility funding is proposed to increase and these ongoing funds are essential to support replacement transit fleet over next five years. We will need to replace 5-10 buses during that period.*
- *The increase to Small Transit Intensive Cities funding, the STIC set aside, is a great financial incentive to programs like ours where we provide service or service is used at a level that is competitive with large systems. We put this money right back into the system to ensure we can continue with high frequency service and meet the demand of riders.*
- *The bill has Bike-Pedestrian funding options that support the community need and that could also provide improved transit access which is a key ingredient to growing ridership and providing for safe access to transit for all riders.*
- *The package is also attractive for Amtrak and we are excited to see that funding called out as passenger rail service is important to our community and impacts our downtown area. We see the funding as a potential opportunity for the desired relocation of the downtown station to a more attractive and long term sustainable location.*
- *Lastly, there is no state funding for transit in Arizona and these federal funds allow us to maximize the investment our taxpayers in transit and ensure we can maintain a good state of repair for fleet and facilities while providing excellent transit services.*

*We appreciate the City support and interest in our reauthorization message. We want to support any specific asks that the City may have if you want to share some of your talking points. We appreciate the partnership that allows us to carry a unified message for our community. I did fail to recognize we share a federal liaison, Bob Holmes, during our conversation and Bob already has this letter and our talking points.*

### **Recent Meetings**

Recent meetings include a Board meeting with LAUNCH Flagstaff and United Way.

Rick Tadder, Brandi Suda, and I were presenters at a well-attended webinar with the Government Finance Officers of Arizona. The topic was the financing of the public safety pension liability. It was informative and many good questions were asked. Flagstaff's approach to solve this liability is garnering a lot of attention and interest.

There was a meeting with Councilmember Whelan, Jeff Meilbeck with MetroPlan, and me on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Discussion was focused upon the Strategic Plan, opportunities with downtown connectivity, Lone Tree extension, climate action, and emerging technologies.

On August 7<sup>th</sup> the Mayor and I had a discussion with two principals from *Better Place Forest* – a for-profit company that utilizes inholding properties within National Forest Land for purposes of

end-of-life memorials. Very simply, the cremated ashes of member individuals are placed at the base of a designated tree within the property. Visitation is limited and the property is conserved by conservation easement in perpetuity.

Todd Madeksza is assisting the company, which has operations in California. They have secured property here in the Hart Prairie area (160 ac) which is an inholding within the Coconino National Forest off of FR 151. The meeting we had was introductory and we truly appreciated that the City, which is not a stakeholder in this endeavor, was included in the due diligence process. Mayor Evans strongly encouraged the members of the company to reach out to those Tribal neighbors who have not yet been engaged in this 'due diligence' process.

That is all for now, Council. We hope that you enjoyed your Council Recess.