

RESOLUTION NO. 21-20

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CITIZENS FOR JANUARY 2019 TO APRIL 2020 PURSUANT TO CITY CHARTER §3-10(D)

WHEREAS, City Council is required by City Charter §3-10(d) to provide for an annual "Report to the Citizens" in order to maintain accountability to citizens; and

WHEREAS, City Council appreciates its role as the legislative body of municipal government and values the citizen input it receives during the course of its regular business and during town halls and other special meetings; and

WHEREAS, City Council is proud to adopt its annual Report to the Citizens, outlining City Council's activities and achievements from January 2019 to April 2020, and providing citizens with information about its responsibilities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS:

Section 1. Pursuant to City Charter §3-10(d), City Council hereby adopts the Colorado Springs City Council 2019 Report to the Citizens, attached as Exhibit A and made a part of this Resolution.

DATED at Colorado Springs, Colorado, this 24th day of March, 2020.



Council President

ATTEST:


Sarah B. Johnson, City Clerk



In Review

(Note: This Annual Report to the Citizens covers January 2019- April 2020)

Colorado Springs City Council has gone through change, not only change after the April 2019 At-Large election, but changing the City in positive ways as we continue to prepare for the future during this pivotal time of growth. City Council created new important legislation to make our City safer, protect zoning regulations, and oversee viable area growth. This was arguably the most important year any City Council has undertaken for land-use issues; with monumental decisions impacting affordable housing, the City for Champions (C4C) projects, and final approval of the City's Comprehensive Plan (PlanCOS).

The strength of our local government continues to grow through the collaborative efforts between City Council and Mayor John Suthers. This incredible relationship spurred another smooth budget process and new Strategic Plans for both branches of government that work hand-in-hand.

NEW (AND FAMILIAR) FACES ON COUNCIL

On April 16, 2019 Council Members Tom Strand and Bill Murray were sworn in for a second term, and new Council Member Wayne Williams swore his oath to the City. The three Council Members serve as At-Large Members that represent the entire City. After the swearing-in ceremony, Council voted Richard Skorman as President, and Tom Strand as President Pro Tempore. Council also voted for Chair and Vice Chair of the Colorado Springs Utilities Board of Directors, selecting Jill Gaebler as Chair and Wayne Williams as Vice Chair.

New Council Member Wayne Williams served on the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners (2003-2011), and he was elected as the El Paso County Clerk and Recorder (2011-2015) before being elected as Colorado's Secretary of State (2015-2019).

"I'm grateful for this opportunity," said Williams during a short speech after joining City Council, "We're doing some great things in the City of Colorado Springs, I look forward in joining the eight members of Council and the Mayor and continuing that progress."

Saying Farewell

Council Member Merv Bennett was term limited after serving on Council for eight years. In April 2019, City Council held a farewell party for Bennett to thank him for his service to the City. Bennett said he was “honored to serve as President Pro Tem and then President of City Council,” and spoke highly of Council’s strong relationship with the Mayor’s Office. “If we continue to work as partners, we can accomplish any issue that comes before us,” he said.

CITY BUDGET

- **Consent Calendar**

After minor changes to the 2020 Annual Budget at the City Council Budget Markup Work Session, the City Budget passed unanimously via the Consent Calendar for the third year in a row. The budget continues to be the prime example of collaboration between City Council and the Mayor’s Office. The 2020 General Fund budget is \$331.1 million, which is \$23 million or 7.5 percent more than the 2019 budget.

- **Highlights**

The City’s Budget Committee comprised of four Council Members (Bill Murray, Andres Pico, Don Knight, and Tom Strand) and representatives from the Administrative Branch (Mayor’s Office, Finance Department, and City Attorney’s Office) meet frequently as part of the collaborative effort to create a fair and balanced City budget.

2020 Budget Highlights include:

- \$4.4 million of increased funding for 20 sworn Police positions and eight sworn Fire positions and equipment

- \$1.4 million of continued funding for the City’s Americans with Disabilities Act improvement programs

- \$500,000 of funding to support shelter bed operations for people experiencing homelessness

- \$1 million for a new aerial ladder truck for the Fire Department

- \$9.65 million to keep Police and Fire sworn positions at market average, and increases in civilian compensation to keep-up with market averages

Other highlights include increased funding for parks maintenance and watering, City fleet replacement, Mountain Metro Transit, and continued extra support for Information Technology core infrastructure and cybersecurity improvements.

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCEMENTS

City Council's main workload pertains to land use items, but their job as the legislative branch of our City's government doesn't stop with zoning. Since the beginning of 2019, City Council passed multiple pieces of legislation to enhance safety and protect neighborhoods.

Short Term Rental Regulations

In 2018, City Council put a permit system in place for Short Term Rentals (STR). The permit establishes ground rules for STR owners and ensures payment of LART (Lodgers and Automobile Rental Tax).

In 2019, after extensive input at public meetings and online, Council decided to amend the original STR ordinance with stronger regulations.

- **Ordinance Amendments**
 - Owner occupied STRs allowed in single family zones
 - Non-Owner occupied not allowed in R-1 single family zones
 - Future STR permits must have 500' buffer
 - Maximum occupancy of an STR is limited to two people per bedroom, plus an additional two occupants for the entire unit. Max total not to exceed 15 people.

For more information visit: coloradosprings.gov/str

Bear Management Area

November saw two ordinances by City Council aimed to decrease the amount of human-bear interactions on the Westside. Council adopted the "Bear Management Area Map," which includes most areas within the city limits west of I-25. Residents and businesses in the Bear Management Area must secure their trash within a functioning bear-resistant waste container or within a secured structure at all times.

City Council Members Don Knight and Richard Skorman's districts are the ones impacted by the Bear Management Area. Before a vote took place, the Council Members held two town halls to discuss the proposed changes with the public.

Recreational Vehicle parking amendment

City Council Members worked closely with local organizations to find the best solution to an issue of increased recreational vehicle (RV) parking on City streets. An amendment

was passed March 26, 2019 extending regulations to prohibit RV parking on all streets, alleys, public roadways, or other public right of ways. The amendment passed after Council Members postponed the final vote to work with local nonprofits to remediate any impact this would have on people that would be parked illegally under the new legislation.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS

City Council is committed to adding more affordable housing units throughout the City as Colorado Springs continues to grow. The Mayor has a goal of 1,000 affordable units per year. Council helps the City hit that goal through approving affordable planned unit developments (when a company invests their own money in affordable housing) or aiding construction through government funding.

To kick off 2020, Council unanimously approved the City's Community Development Division's Five Year Consolidated Plan. The plan lays groundwork for the near future by identifying grant money and investment opportunities for housing projects. While this plan looks to the future, the Community Development Division has already been green-lighting affordable housing projects with help from City Council.

- One exciting project is a "tiny home" development called *Working Fusion at Mill Street* in downtown. Council approved an 18-unit tiny home community designed to provide affordable housing and resources to young people between 18-29 years old.

In addition to grant money, recent projects have been made possible through Private Activity Bonds (PAB) from the State. Each year the City is allocated PABs with three options: use the PABs for affordable housing projects in the City, allocate the PABs to El Paso County, or return unused to the State.

- July 2019: Council approved a portion of the City's PABs to break ground on the *Atrium at Austin Bluffs*, a 54-unit senior affordable housing project at Austin Bluffs and Templeton Gap.
- February 2020: Council approved to issue \$21 million in PABs to finance construction of the *Draper Commons* affordable housing project. This will add 280 units and is located at Fountain and Wahsatch.

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

City Hall is referred to as “the People’s House.” That not only means the physical building is open to the public, but your elected leaders on City Council are some of the most accessible government officials.

- **In the Community**

City Council has held 18 large public meetings since the beginning of 2019, including Council District Town Halls, public feedback meetings about Short Term Rentals and separate meetings about Accessory Dwelling Units, Briargate SIMD, and information sessions on the Bear Management Area. Council Members also attend luncheons, neighborhood meetings, city employee events, award ceremonies and political gatherings.

- **Other Duties as assigned**

In addition to serving on City Council, the Council Members serve as the Colorado Springs Utilities Board. Council Members also serve as liaisons to the City’s numerous boards, commissions, and committees. In addition to these City specific roles, City Council has representation on regional boards including the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA), and the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department (PPRBD) Regional Building Commission.

- **First Amendment Rights**

City Hall also serves as a gathering space for protests or other events where people congregate to recognize a certain topic. City Council meetings are open to the public, and the Citizen Discussion portion of Regular City Council Meetings allows the public to speak about any topic not on that day’s Council Agenda.

- **Request a Council Member**

City Council Members also take time to speak with students taking tours of City Hall and to visit schools throughout Colorado Springs to teach students about local government. If you would like a tour of City Hall or want a Council Member to speak at a school or community event, please reach out to Ted Skroback, City Council Communications Specialist, at 719-385-5482 or tskroback@springsgov.com.

(Side note) Tour City Hall

Want to know more about one of the City’s most historic buildings? Reach out to City Council Staff and we’ll be happy to take groups or individuals on a tour!

- **New Times for Council Meetings**

After multiple City Council Work Sessions and Regular Meetings ran into the evening hours, City Council decided to make a permanent change to start meetings at 10 a.m. instead of 1 p.m.

(Side note) Making Improvements

Historic City Hall underwent enhancements to continue improving ADA accessibility, overall security, and updated technology.

In May 2019, metal detectors were added to City Hall entrances to ensure safety for our elected officials, City Staff, and the public.

Facilities completely overhauled the Southeast entrance to City Hall (the main entrance because of ADA accessibility). The update is not only for stylistic reasons, but comes with better accessibility and security.

In 2020, an overhaul of technical equipment inside Council Chambers will improve Council meeting broadcasts and enhance the experience for people attending Council meetings.

New ADA signage, remodeled bathrooms, and an ADA podium in Council Chambers make City Hall one of the most accessible historic public buildings in the country.

DECISIONS IMPACTING THE CITY (TIMELINE FORMAT)

- January 2019 – PlanCOS, the City’s long-term Comprehensive Planning Document, is approved by Council

(Side note) Chief of Police Vince Niski sworn-in at February 26, 2019 City Council Meeting

- February-March 2019—United States Air Force Visitors Center project; annexation and approval for True North Commons shopping, lodging, and restaurant development area
- March 2019—Recreational Vehicle parked on roadways ordinance amendment
- May 2019—Denied an appeal to allow Broadmoor expansion for a permanent exhibition hall
- June 2019—City Council 2020-2024 Strategic Plan
- August 2019—Refers 2B (parks TABOR retention of \$7 million) and 2C (road improvements) to November 2019 ballot
- September 2019—Approval for next steps to connect Powers to I-25
- October 2019—Bear Management Ordinances
- November 2019—2020 City Budget via consent calendar
- November 2019—Final stadium land use plan and partial right-of-way transfer for Downtown Stadium
- November 2019—Approval of the City’s first “Entertainment District” in downtown allowing a common consumption area of food and alcohol

- November 2019—Approved Trails and Open Spaces (TOPS) purchase of \$3.1 million for land in Corral Bluffs (the area was recently linked to historic fossil discoveries dating back 66 million years)
- December 2019—Short Term Rental Ordinance amendments approved
- December 2019—Final approval for Robson Arena on Colorado College campus
- December 2019—Historic Preservation Plan approved
- January 2020—Unanimous approval to sell six acres for \$1.7 million in Peak Innovation Park near the airport to build two hotels
- January 2020—Land-use approval to build 427-unit community at the former Nazarene Bible College campus which is part of a Federal Opportunity Zone
- February 2020—Authorizes Southwest Downtown Business Improvement District to issue \$50 million in bonds to finance improvements in the area of downtown where the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Museum will be the centerpiece

BY THE NUMBERS

Ordinances: 121 Passed by City Council and signed by Mayor Suthers

Resolutions: 174 adopted by City Council

Proclamations: 76

Board Appointments: 113

Town Halls: 18

UTILITIES BOARD

Colorado Springs City Council members also serve as the Colorado Springs Utilities Board of Directors. Under the Board’s guidance, our community-owned utility made many significant achievements in 2019. Some highlights:

Renewable energy portfolio expansion and announced plans for storage project

Colorado Springs Utilities (Springs Utilities) is committed to providing resilient, reliable and cost-effective energy that is environmentally sustainable. In partnership with NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, the utility brought on the Grazing Yak Solar Project. This 35-megawatt solar project will produce enough renewable energy to power about 13,000 homes annually.

The utility also announced it entered negotiations for the Pike Solar and Storage Project, its first utility-scale solar and battery project. This project will consist of 150 megawatts of new solar generation plus a 25-megawatt energy storage. At this time, it is the largest energy storage facility announced in Colorado.

Enhanced partnerships with local military installations

Springs Utilities understands the Pikes Peak area military installations are critical to our national security and to our state and local economies. In 2019, the utility explored several significant partnership opportunities with the military installations to enhance energy resiliency and mission assurance with the local installations and Army/Air Force headquarters.

Water treatment plant upgrade

Significant progress continues in upgrading the Phillip H. Tollefson Water Treatment Plant. This includes the replacement of aging pretreatment facilities, chemical systems and instrumentation and controls. These upgrades enable compliance with Board Policies, the Safe Drinking Water Act and other drinking water regulations and allow for the use of highly variable local water sources that will be critical for our community supplying its future water needs. The project is scheduled for completion in late 2020.

Critical utility services to at-risk customers

Project COPE (Citizens Option to Provide Energy) provided \$1,042,613 in utilities payment assistance to 2,637 households. Project COPE was created by Springs Utilities more than 30 years ago to assist customers at risk of losing utilities services due to personal or family crises. The program is funded by donations from individuals, foundations and businesses and Springs Utilities matches these donations up to \$500,000 annually.

2019 Line Workers Rodeo

In March, the American Public Power Association's Lineworkers Rodeo was held in Colorado Springs. With 115 employee volunteers on hand, the event brought in more than 1,000 competitors and spectators, generating an estimated \$1 million for the local economy. Teams from across the country competed for top honors in their field.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)

With Automated Meter Reading system nearing its end-of-life, Springs Utilities signed a contract with Landis+Gyr in July to connect 590,000 new electric, natural gas and water meters to an integrated network management and data collection system over a multi-year period. AMI is the core of a smart utility and will create new opportunities to help customers better manage their services in the future.

Increased credit rating from AA to AA+

Amid change, increasing regulations and industry flux, Springs Utilities improved its financial stability. Standard & Poor's upgraded the utility's credit rating from AA to AA+. This strong rating is indicative of the utility's resilient operational and financial characteristics. The increased credit score will lead to improved investor interest in bonds and lower interest rates when new bonds are issued. Ultimately, this improved rating benefits its customers.

New Energy Vision

With robust public input, in June of 2019, the Utilities Board approved a new Energy Vision statement: "Provide resilient, reliable and cost-effective energy that is environmentally sustainable, reduces our carbon footprint and uses proven state-of-the-art technologies to enhance our quality of life for generations to come." Work began to develop supporting goals for the Energy Vision through the Electric and Natural Gas Integrated Resource Planning process. These plans will become the roadmap for meeting the energy needs of our community over the next 30 years.

Smart home technologies in 2019 Parade of Homes

Springs Utilities partnered with Classic Homes for the 2019 Parade of Homes to illustrate how smart technology and solar energy, battery storage and electric vehicle systems may impact future energy operations. The home also utilized energy and water efficient appliances, components, and irrigation equipment that the public was able to view and learn more about.

Partnering with forest agencies to invest \$15 million in watershed restoration

Springs Utilities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region and Colorado State Forest Service announced plans to invest \$16 million, over a five-year period, in forest and watershed restoration projects. These projects will occur on more than 11,000 acres in Springs Utilities' critical watersheds located on the White River and Pike-San Isabel National Forests. The Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region and Springs Utilities have been in partnership since 2013, and together, have reduced the risk of catastrophic wildfire, restored forests impacted by wildfire, and minimized erosion and sedimentation in reservoirs to over 12,000 acres of National Forest System lands.

Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival

Springs Utilities participated in the third annual Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival. More than 800 District 11 fourth graders learned the importance of protecting our community's water resources and tips to use water wisely, including: watering according to season, taking advantage of the utility's rebates on irrigation equipment and visiting the

Conservation and Environmental Center to see examples of water-wise landscapes.

Enhanced safety training program

Springs Utilities' Safety Department collaborated with the University of Springs Utilities to develop a training program and to identify hazards, conduct pre-job meetings and make field observations. These measures have made the workplace even safer, which is one of the organizations' top priorities. The utility also increased its joint training efforts with the Colorado Springs Fire Department to provide safety training and simulation for electric field staff.

Capital project management improvements

The System Planning and Projects Division was established as part of the new CEO's vision for the future of the organization. The most significant task for the new division is the management of the capital projects. Using the annual operating financial plan as a guide, they ensured all funds were carefully invested in the right projects at the right time for infrastructure improvements. The target was to be within 2% on \$156.7 million. The utility ended the year within 0.9%. This process will benefit the utility's customers as it continues to replace, upgrade, expand or enhance its four-service infrastructure.

Striving to be a good financial steward, Springs Utilities also created an internal team to identify saving opportunities across the utility, focusing on Operations and Maintenance efficiencies and process improvements, proving to be very successful.