



# City of Colorado Springs

City Hall  
107 N. Nevada Avenue  
Colorado Springs, CO  
80903

## Meeting Minutes City Council

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Monday, April 7, 2025

1:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### Special City Council Meeting

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Estimated agenda item times are provided for planning purposes and do not constitute notice of a specific time for any item. Items may take more or less time than estimated. City Council may amend the order of items.

### 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

President Helms called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

- Present:** 7 - Councilmember Yolanda Avila, President Pro Tem Lynette Crow-Iverson, Councilmember Dave Donelson, President Randy Helms, Councilmember David Leinweber, Councilmember Mike O'Malley, and Councilmember Michelle Talarico
- Excused:** 2 - Councilmember Nancy Henjum, and Councilmember Brian Risley

### 2. Public Hearing

- 2.A. [FBZN-24-001](#) Appeal of the Downtown Review Board's approval of a Form-Based Zone Development Plan for the ONE Vela Mixed Use Building on a 1.09 acre, FBZ-CEN (Form-Based Zone - Central Sector) zoned property located on the northeast corner of Sahwatch St. and W. Costilla St. (Quasi-Judicial)
- [6](#)

Related Files: NA

Located in Council District 3

Presenter:

Ryan Tefertiller, Planning Manager, Urban Planning Division  
Kevin Walker, Director, Planning Department

**Attachments:** [DRB Staff Report ONE Vela RT](#)

[Attachment 1 - ONE Vela Zoning Exhibit](#)

[Attachment 2 - Stakeholder Comments](#)

[Attachment 3 - ONE Vela Project Statement](#)

[Attachment 4 - ONE Vela Development Plan](#)

[Attachment 5 - Experience Downtown Plan on a Page](#)

[Attachment 6 - PlanCOS Vision Map](#)

[Appeal Statement - One Vela](#)

[Combined Late Stakeholder Input ONE Vela 020325](#)

[Combined Late Stakeholder Input ONE Vela 020425](#)

[DIANNE BRIDGES APPEAL PRESENTATION](#)

[ONE Vela FBZDP CityCouncil Appeal Presentation RBT 040725](#)

[DRB Minutes 2.4.25 Final](#)

[One Vela City Council Application Presentation 040125](#)

Ryan Tefertiller, Urban Planning Manager, presented the Form-Based Zone (FBZ) Development Plan for the ONE Vela mixed use building on a 1.09 acre, FBZ-CEN (Form-Based Zone - Central Sector) zoned property located on the northeast corner of Sahwatch Street and West Costilla Street. He provided an overview of the vicinity map, application, project summary, plan boundaries, application referral, site history, original Plan documents, stakeholder notice and input. Mr. Tefertiller identified the FBZ Development Plan description, details, standards, rendering, elevation, guidelines, architectural detail, and compliance with the Experience Downtown Plan/PlanCOS. Mr. Tefertiller went over the technical modifications, review reports, appeal details, and optional motions.

Diane Bridges, representative of Historic Neighborhoods Partnership, representing the appellant, spoke in opposition to the project and introduced Robert Bruce, Esq., RJD Lawyer, LLC, representing the appellant, who provided an overview of the building height versus City

skyline, a ballot question regarding building height limits, view of America's Mountain Pikes Peak, premature development approval, and inadequate stakeholder engagement.

Councilmember Talarico asked which neighborhoods Ms. Bridges is representing. Ms. Bridges stated that she is representing herself, but the Historic Neighborhood Partnership supports the same aspects of the appeal.

Kevin O'Neil, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), O'Neil Group, representing the applicant, introduced Frank André, Lead Architect, Hord Coplan Macht, representing the applicant, provided an overview of the O'Neil Group, Vela Development Partners, growing aerospace/defense industry, 2024 downtown foot traffic, precedent projects, project narrative, site location, project details, Plan conformance, Form Based Code compliance, elevation, amenity courtyard, and interior amenity.

Councilmember Donelson asked if the projects in Kansas City and St. Louis, MO were the tallest buildings in those cities. Mr. André stated they were not. Councilmember Donelson asked if those cities have mountains like Colorado Springs. Mr. André stated they do not.

Nick Benjamin, Principal, Vela Development Partners, representing the applicant, stated they take their responsibility to the City incredibly seriously and they are committed to ensuring their project exceeds City standards.

Councilmember Donelson asked Mr. O'Neil if he is concerned about citizens not having an opportunity to weigh in on building height limits. Mr. O'Neil stated they have had citizen involvement for approximately two years and based on citizen input, they reduced the building height from thirty-six stories to twenty-seven stories.

Citizens Johnna Reeder Kleymeyer, President and CEO Colorado Springs Chamber & Economic Development Corporation, Jill Gaebler, Executive Director, Pikes Peak Housing Network, Chelsea Gondeck, Director of Planning and Mobility, Colorado Springs Downtown Partnership, James Rigdon, Downtown Partnership Board, Sam Friesema, Urban Renewal Authority (URA) Board, Downtown Review Board, and Hillside Neighborhood Team, Bob Riefstahl, URA Board, spoke in support of the proposed project.

Councilmember Leinweber requested additional information regarding the trends of the newer generation. Ms. Reeder Kleymeyer provided an overview of Newmark Global Site Selection Study which identified the need

for communities to target the population of eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old people who are highly mobile and the different values they focus on.

Councilmember Leinweber asked how restrictions on growth would affect large corporations coming into the City. Ms. Reeder Kleymeyer stated it would put the City at a disadvantage.

Councilmember Donelson asked how Colorado Springs ranks as best city to live in. Ms. Reeder Kleymeyer stated it has been in the top five best cities to live in for the past five years.

Councilmember Donelson asked if anyone has ever indicated that they cannot move to the City because its skyscrapers are not tall enough. Ms. Reeder Kleymeyer stated they have heard that businesses cannot move to the City because it does not have enough Class A office space or because their young professionals want to live around their facility.

Citizens Elizabeth Marrs, Lisa Bigelow, Renee Anderson, Tim Hoiles, Richard Smith, Dutch Schultz, President of the Old North End Neighborhood, Kat Gayle, Melody Neal, David Ebbink, Dana Duggan, President, Integrity Matters, and Donna Strom spoke in opposition of the proposed project.

Mr. Bruce stated the benefits to the City can be accomplished without increasing the skyline, this is the first residential skyrise which will set a precedent for future developers and should not be approved without a robust stakeholder process.

Councilmember Donelson asked who approved the increase in building height limit in 2009. Mr. Tefertiller stated staff worked with a range of stakeholders to draft the Downtown Form Base Code which changed the zoning for approximately a square mile, there were many public hearings regarding it, and was approved by City Council.

Councilmember Donelson asked if citizens have ever been able to vote on a downtown building height limit. Mr. Tefertiller stated to his knowledge, there has never been a ballot initiative concerning height restrictions.

Councilmember Donelson asked if there was a downtown building height limit prior to the FBZ. Mr. Tefertiller explained there was originally a fifty-foot height limit until the 1950's with certain exceptions and then the High-Rise Overlay Zone was established which was based on a sloping plane.

Councilmember Donelson asked if the ONE Vela Development Plan was approved Administratively. Mr. Tefertiller stated the ONE Vela Development Plan met the City's quantifiable standards however staff chose to refer it to the Downtown Review Board. He also commented that prior to the FBZ, tall projects in the High-Rise Overlay could be approved Administratively.

Councilmember Donelson stated because this would set precedence, City Council should table this appeal until the new City Council is seated, citizen input is taken, and a new policy is developed, or City Council should uphold the appeal.

President Helms stated he does not believe this item should be tabled for a new City Council to decide on, he feels it is City Council's duty and obligation to make a decision on this appeal, this is a good project for the City, and he has listened to the citizens both against and for this project.

**Motion by Councilmember O'Malley, seconded by Councilmember Talarico, to deny the appeal, upholding the Downtown Review Board approval of the One Vela Form-Based Zone Development Plan application, based on the findings that the appeal does not meet the appeal criteria found in Section 7.5.415.A.2.a. of the UDC. The motion passed by a vote of 6-1-2-0**

**Aye:** 6 - Avila, Crow-Iverson, Helms, Leinweber, O'Malley, and Talarico

**No:** 1 - Donelson

**Excused:** 2 - Henjum, and Risley

### **3. Executive Session**

#### **3.A. [25-186](#)**

In accord with City Charter art. III, § 3-60(d) and its incorporated Colorado Open Meetings Act, C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) the City Council, in Open Session, is to determine whether it will hold a Closed Executive Session. The issue to be discussed involves consultation with the City Attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice regarding the referendum process and referendum elections.

The President of Council shall poll the City Councilmembers, and, upon consent of two-thirds of the members present, may conduct a Closed Executive Session. In the event any City Councilmember is participating electronically or telephonically in the Closed Executive Session, each City Councilmember participating in the Closed Executive Session shall affirmatively state for the record that no other member of the public not authorized to participate in the Closed Executive Session is present or

able to hear the matters discussed as part of the Closed Executive Session. If consent to the Closed Executive Session is not given, the item may be discussed in Open Session or withdrawn from consideration.

Presenter:

Wynetta Massey, City Attorney

**Attachments:** [Closed Session memo - 3-31-25.docx](#)

Ben Bolinger, Corporate Division Chief, Office of the City Attorney, stated that in accord with City Charter art. III, § 3-60(d) and its incorporated Colorado Open Meetings Act, C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) and (e), the City Council, in Open Session, is to determine whether it will hold a Closed Executive Session. The issue to be discussed involves consultation with the City Attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice regarding the referendum process and referendum.

President Helms polled City Council regarding the desire to proceed with an electronic Closed Executive Session. At least two-thirds of City Council agreed to proceed in a Closed Executive Session.

#### **4. Adjourn**

Upon conclusion of the Closed Executive Session, and there being no further business to come before City Council, President Helms adjourned the meeting at 4:55 PM.

Sarah B. Johnson, City Clerk