City of Greeley, Colorado

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

June 24, 2025

1. **Call to Order**
   Mayor Gates called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at 1001 11th Ave, Greeley, Colorado, with hybrid participation available via the City's Zoom platform.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   Mayor Gates led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**
   City Clerk Heid Leatherwood called the roll.
   The following were present:

   Councilmember Tommy Butler
   Councilmember Deb DeBoutez via Zoom.
   Councilmember Brett Payton
   Councilmember Johnny Olson
   Councilmember Melissa McDonald
   Mayor John Gates

   Mayor Pro Tem Dale Hall was absent (excused).

4. **Reports from Mayor and Councilmembers**
   None.

5. **Initiative 9-2025 City Council Committee Structure**
   Chief Operating Officer, Blair Snow, presented this item at 6:01 p.m.

   Ms. Snow shared a presentation showcasing options to create subcommittees for major projects in response to a Council initiative. These subcommittees would enable deeper discussions in between regular Council meetings.

   The proposed focus areas included West Greeley transportation projects, the MERGE project, the Highway 34 and County Road 17 interchange, downtown redevelopment, and civic campus planning. Council members on these subcommittees would attend monthly meetings and provide updates to council during regular meetings. The goal was to streamline staff efforts while ensuring consistent Council feedback.

   The ideal size for each subcommittee is 3 to 4 members, and the process could be reevaluated after six months.

Councilmember Olson asked about the structure of the proposed subcommittees, would there be individual meetings for each project area. Staff clarified that each initiative—such as Cascadia, 35th & 47th, Merge, and downtown—would have its own separate subcommittee. Mr. Lee and Ms. Snow explained that these would function as individual standing committees, with updates shared during regular Council meetings, particularly in the report-out portion of the agenda. The City Attorney, Ms. Aurzada, added that under current policies, the mayor has the authority to appoint Councilmembers to committees, and a formal motion or resolution would be required to establish the committees.

Councilmember Butler cautioned against forming too many committees, which he said could lead to siloed discussions, but supported the idea for these particular initiatives due to their size and significance.

Mayor Gates echoed these concerns, emphasizing that the scale of these projects justifies the structure but would generally oppose additional committees beyond these.

Councilmember Payton shared that he had originally envisioned one broader development committee but agreed the scope of the three proposed projects warranted separate attention. He noted that distributing the workload across more members could be beneficial.

Councilmember McDonald asked whether the subcommittees were intended to replace two-by-two meetings, expressing appreciation for the informal yet informative nature of those discussions. Ms. Snow responded that while two-by-twos had been useful, they were staff-intensive and lacked transparency. The new committee format would be public, more efficient, and still allow for Council feedback while preserving staff time.

Ms. Snow concluded by emphasizing that the committees were intended to sunset as projects conclude, with flexibility to reassign members or form new committees as needed.

Mayor Gates indicated he would solicit input from Councilmembers about their interest in serving on the various committees and thanked staff for the information.

6. MERGE Council Update

Public Works Deputy Director/Chief Engineer Bhooshan Karnik presented this item at 6:11 p.m.

Mr. Karnik introduced RS&H Project Manager George Tsiouvaras and HDR Strategic Communications Katie Angel. He opened the presentation by introducing the design team and providing an initial status update on securing the design contract and approvals from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Mr. Karnik explained that the Public Works and Transportation Department issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to procure a consultant team for full design services, with RS&H selected as the prime consultant following a vetting process.

Mr. Tsiouvaras highlighted the project's significance and noted that state and federal funds would support the two interchanges and central loading mobility hub, with other project elements funded separately. Mr. Karnik reported that federal grant funding, including a $50 million Raise Grant, has been secured, with ongoing coordination with CDOT on intergovernmental agreements and permits. Negotiations on RS&H's full scope and fee were underway, alongside preparations for procuring a construction manager/general contractor (CMGC).

Regarding the project schedule, Mr. Tsiouvaras explained efforts to accelerate construction to late 2026, noting this would reduce costs significantly if critical path issues are avoided.

Ms. Angel emphasized the importance of a robust communications and public engagement plan to build community consensus and ensure transparency. Active collaboration with FHWA, CDOT, stakeholders, and the public would be critical throughout the project milestones to maintain awareness and support.

Mr. Tsiouvaras addressed timely real estate acquisition, presenting an overview of properties impacted along the project alignment. While formal right-of-way acquisition cannot proceed until NEPA clearance, the team will engage early with property owners to facilitate the process. All acquisitions will comply with city, state, and federal requirements.

The presentation concluded with assurance that the design and environmental phases will closely coordinate with Public Works, Transportation, and Real Estate Management to maintain the project schedule and minimize delays.

Mayor Gates inquired about the sequencing of the projects, specifically whether 35th Avenue would be prioritized. Mr. Karnik clarified that final phasing has not yet been determined and will be shaped by the NEPA and CMGC processes.

Councilmember Butler asked about the timeline for securing a TIFIA loan. Mr. Karnik explained that after submitting updated letters of intent—reflecting newly awarded federal grants—the loan process will take approximately 12 months. This aligns with the projected construction start in late 2026.

Councilmember Butler asked for clarification on outreach. Ms. Angel explained that public engagement planning was set to begin in the coming months, with outreach activities expected to launch between July and September. The city will use a mix of in-person meetings, virtual tools, and multilingual materials to ensure inclusive community participation. Social media and local press will also be used to communicate key project milestones.

Councilmember Olson requested a cost estimate broken down by project zones to better understand how federal, state, and local funds were allocated. Staff noted that a more refined cost breakdown will be developed as the project advances.

Mr. Tsiouvaras also clarified environmental scoping has begun, but official work cannot start until scope and fee agreements are finalized and approved by FHWA, which may take 3–4 months. Councilmember Olson expressed concerns about delays and the ability to start using local match funds effectively.

Finally, concerns were raised about an upcoming request for eminent domain authority. Councilmember Payton asked whether staff would seek broad authorization without specifying affected properties. Ms. Aurzada responded that more clarity would be provided before returning to Council for approval, but acknowledged they want early authority in case it's needs.

Mayor Gates thanked staff for the information.

7. **Initiative 6-2025 Weld County Road 17 and US Highway 34 Interchange Update**
Public Works Deputy Director and Chief Engineer Bhooshan Karnik, presented this item at 6:11 p.m. Bolton & Menk, Inc. Project Manager, Ryan Davis were available for questions.

Mr. Karnik provided an informational update to on the Weld County Road 17 and US 34 interchange project. He introduced the consultant team and outlined the project's current status, schedule, and next steps. The Public Works and Transportation Department procured Bolton & Menk as the design consultant, initially for an at-grade intersection.

Mr. Davis continued the presentation by explaining that the final interchange configuration will be selected through CDOT's Interchange Selection Report, a key component of the 1601 process. The design also included a crossing at 131st Avenue and a centrally located mobility hub. Weld County is currently negotiating two intergovernmental agreements (IGAs): one with CDOT for the 1601 process, and another with the City of Greeley, and the towns of Windsor and Johnstown for cost-sharing and related commitments.

Mr. Ryan noted that construction was expected to begin in June 2028, aligning with the Cascadia project. Critical path items included completion of the Interchange Selection Report, preliminary design, and right-of-way acquisition. Mr. Davis said that while the final design was pending, engagement with affected property owners had already begun,

Councilmember Olson expressed strong support for keeping the CDOT approval process at the staff level rather than escalating to the Transportation Commission. Mr. Karnick assured a noise analysis would still be conducted to guide development setbacks.

Councilmember Olson asked about the plan to hire two separate CMGC contractors for the MERGE and Weld County Road 17 projects, noting potential complications in managing separate contracts. Mr. Karnik clarified that although the preference was to use one CMGC, mixing federally funded and locally funded projects could lead to issues with accounting and compliance, making separate procurements more practical.

Councilmember Butler inquired about the involvement of Windsor and Johnstown, as the interchange lies within their growth boundaries. Ms. Aurzada confirmed that Weld County is leading those discussions, and both towns are open to participating in design cost-sharing.

Councilmember Butler wanted clarification on the project's funding source, asking whether it would come from the Cascadia GID. Mr. Lee indicated that while the GID could contribute to funding, broader financial participation from local jurisdictions and the county is expected, particularly for construction.

Councilmember Olson revisited prior capital improvement planning, noting that $20 million had been allocated for this intersection in the CIP. Mr. Trombino confirmed that although the design contract was retained, the $20 million was removed in the 2025 update, leaving the project currently unfunded for construction.

Councilmember Payton added a reminder that the City already holds a right-of-way agreement with VEMA on County Road 17, which staff acknowledged is documented in the current project development process.

Mayor Gates thanked staff and the consultant for the information.

8. Grow Greeley Area Planning

Planning Supervisor, Caleb Jackson presented the item at 6:50 p.m.

Mr. Jackson presented an overview of the "Grow Greeley" area planning initiative, which aimed to align the city's various planning efforts under a cohesive strategy. This initiative supports City Council's 2037 vision for community vitality by promoting intentional growth through coordinated area and neighborhood plans. The Grow Greeley strategy encompassed both current planning efforts—Grow West and Grow East—and communicates how existing plans interconnect and support each other.

The Grow West area encompasses 21 square miles west of 83rd Avenue, of which only 2 square miles are currently developed. Mr. Jackson highlighted that this as a major growth opportunity independent of the Cascadia project. The planning team began work in May 2025, with a community engagement event, July 9, 2025, and adoption in 2026.

The Grow East area is also 21 square miles, with 13 square miles still undeveloped. The focus was on connectivity to existing neighborhoods and downtown. Rick Engineering is leading the project in partnership with Public Works, and initial stakeholder outreach has begun. Community engagement events are anticipated in August, with final plan adoption also slated for mid-2026.

Mr. Jackson concluded by requesting Council input on important stakeholders to engage, key elements to consider, and any additional feedback to support the development of these area plans.

Councilmember Olson asked if the area plans currently underway are the same eight subarea plans previously approved by Council. Staff clarified that while some original plans, like those for the airport and downtown, remain relevant, others have been consolidated into broader East and West area plans.

Councilmember DeBoutez supported the themes discussed in the presentation and asked for clarification on the term "form-based code." Mr. Jackson explained that it focuses more on the physical form and design of developments, rather than strictly on land uses, to help shape neighborhood character.

Councilmember DeBoutez asked how far east the Grow East plan extends and whether it included the confluence of the Poudre and Platte Rivers. Mr. Jackson confirmed that the plan encompassed that area and extends roughly a half mile east of Weld County Parkway.

Councilmember Butler asked about the implementation of these plans. Mr. Jackson responded that implementation strategies are a key component of each area plan and will include clear actions and accountability measures.

Councilmember Butler stated the importance of assigning oversight responsibilities during the planning process. Staff acknowledged that implementation would likely involve multiple departments and community stakeholders.

Mayor Gates acknowledged that Council had not directly answered the key feedback questions posed by staff. He thanked staff for the information and recommended that they continue to seek input throughout the process.

9. Scheduling of Meetings, Other Events

None.

10. Motion to go into Executive Session to Request and Receive Legal Advice from the City Attorney regarding a proposed Initiative Petition

<u>**A motion to go into an Executive Session for a conferral with the City Attorney, to request and receive legal advice regarding a proposed initiative petition, as provided in C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) and Greeley Municipal Code 2-151(a)(2).**</u>

<u>**Councilmember Butler moved to approve the motion. Councilmember Payton seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0 at 7:07 p.m. with Mayor Pro Tem Hall absent.**</u>

11. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Gates adjourned the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

10. Executive Session to Request and Receive Legal Advice from the City Attorney regarding a proposed Initiative Petition

Mayor Gates started the Executive Session at 7:13 p.m. in the Executive Room of City Center South. The meeting was electronically recorded as required by Colorado Open Meetings Law.

All Councilmembers were present, with Councilmember DeBoutez and Hall appearing remotely, along with Attorney Dawn Bookhardt. City Manager Raymond Lee, City Attorney Stacey Aurzada, Chief Operating Officer Blair Snow, Chief Financial Officer Allena Portis, and City Clerk Heidi Leatherwood were also present.

The executive session was for the purpose to receive legal advice related to these matters as provided for under C.R.S. Section 24-6-402(4)(b) and Greeley Municipal Code Section 2-151 (a)(2).

Mayor Gates cautioned each participant in this executive session to confine discussion to the stated purpose, and reminded everyone that no formal action may occur in executive session. He asked if at any point in the executive session any participant believes that the discussion was going outside the proper scope of the executive session, to please interrupt the discussion and raise an objection.

City Attorney Aurzada asked that the recording be paused at 7:14 p.m. for attorney client privilege discussion to occur. With the conversation ending, the recorder was turned on again at 7:50 p.m.

The Executive Session concluded at 7:51 p.m.

The recording of this executive session will be retained as provided in the City's records retention policy and in conformity with Colorado Open Meetings Law for a period of 90 days.

Approved

X

John Gates
Mayor

Attest

X

Heidi Leatherwood
City Clerk