

City of Fruita – Livability Commission Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2024

Members in Attendance: Amy Miller, John Rodwick, Al Condor, Dave Karisny, Terri Potente, Jamie Vavra, Jessica Ruffule

Members Absent: Tom McNamara, Connie Overton, Chris Taggart, Sheila Adamson

Staff in Attendance: Shannon Vassen, Kimberly Preisser, Jennifer Cupp

Guests in Attendance: Jean Rodwick

I. Call to Order/Roll Call

Dave Karisny, Chair for the Livability Commission, called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Karisny opened the meeting for public comment. After seeing none, or anyone that wanted to provide a comment to the Livability Commission, Mr. Karisny closed this item.

III. Review and Approve Minutes

- a. Regular Minutes – November 16, 2023, Meeting**
- b. Regular Minutes – January 18, 2024**

There were no changes to the minutes from the November 16, 2023, meeting. However, Mr. Karisny said that there was clarification regarding the January 18, 2024, minutes. He explained that there was a question he posed to the City Manager regarding housing that needed to be corrected. Once the change was noted, he asked for a motion to approve both sets of minutes. John Rodwick made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 16, 2023, meeting and the January 18, 2024, revised minutes, Terri Potente seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Member Reports

- a)** Ms. Potente told the group that Sarah Brooks from Grand Valley Transit (GVT) would be willing to do a presentation about a fixed circular GVT route in Fruita. Mr. Karisny said that there is a general route for GVT that comes from Grand Junction. He said it stops in a few places around Fruita and then goes back to Grand Junction. Ms. Potente said that GVT can't fund a fixed circular Fruita route at this time, but they are happy to do a presentation about what it may look like in the future. Mr. Karisny said that the sustainability of the route may not be there. Mr. Rodwick thought that the Commission should see if there is a real

need for a local GVT Route. Mr. Karisny said that the last time the GVT did a public participation survey of their services, there was some interest in a circular Fruita route and that this might be an opportunity for the City to add questions to the survey it will conduct, regarding transportation services. Councilor Miller said that the Wildcat Residences triggered an additional stop on the GVT route, creating a circular pattern by stopping at the same stop twice, once on the way into town and once on the way back to Grand Junction. There were some questions about the Wildcat Residences and Mr. Vassen gave a brief overview of the project. Mr. Vassen said that the community survey takes place in 2025 and, while there aren't any specific questions about the GVT, there are some traffic related questions.

- b) Mr. Rodwick gave a short summary of the AARP monthly video he watched yesterday. He said they gave an overview of West Bend, Wisconsin. They have branded their age friendly community initiative, creating both a logo and a slogan. They are trying to get people excited about living in an age friendly community. Mr. Vassen said that the age friendly community plan is due for renewal. He said that the Livability Commission could present an idea for branding during the renewal process. Mr. Rodwick thought that would be a good idea, as did Mr. Karisny.

- c) Jessica Ruffule said the State has funding now to help with rent for people facing eviction. She said the State realizes there is great need, but they are doing what they can with the funds they have. Mr. Karisny said that with the housing being built, that there may be a population boom in Fruita. Mr. Rodwick asked if the City is working on programs to encourage home sales in Fruita. Mr. Vassen said that there was a downpayment assistance program through Housing Resources. Councilor Miller said that there are many programs available, just nothing specific to Fruita. She explained that the funding resources weren't realistic and, once they looked at it, they couldn't do it on the scale they wanted to. Mr. Rodwick said that there was an article in the Wall Street Journal, saying that the rental market will increase due to the difficulty of people getting bank loans. Mr. Rodwick said this would work if the rents were reasonable, but he didn't know how to prevent rent gouging.

V. Staff Report

- a. None Reported

VI. Discussion Items

a. AARP Community Challenge Grant

Mr. Karisny said that the deadline for the AARP Community Challenge Grant is coming up in March. He said that the Livability Commission had presented two ideas in the past, a community garden, and a book locker. It is a very competitive process. Mr. Karisny said that we could choose to do either one of those projects again or come up with something new. Mr. Vassen said that the raised garden

bed was of some interest to not only the seniors but also for the children who attend classes at the Community Center, so it could be of multi-generational use. Ms. Preisser said that she attended the webinar for the grant in January and said that the community gardens have been funded in the past. She did have some questions about who would write the grant application and the criteria. Mr. Rodwick suggested giving the state office a call, they can guide you through the process, and give some idea of the criteria. Mr. Karisny asked Mr. Rodwick if there was someone she could contact. Ms. Potente said to call the State Directors office and talk to Sara Schueneman. Mr. Vassen said that it didn't look like the application had changed that much from previous years. He said that it is a highly competitive grant. They receive around 5,000 applications and accept only 800. He also suggested that the group submit both grant applications, as that is allowed. Mr. Karisny asked which grant the group wanted to submit, or if they would like to submit both. Mr. Rodwick suggested just the community garden as it has been funded before. Councilor Miller said she thought the group should submit both since there is no restriction. It was decided to submit both.

b. Updated Livability Index Score

Mr. Karisny said that in November the livability index score had been updated and the group wanted to discuss both the score and the criteria. Fruita's score is 56 out of 100, which may seem low, but the highest-ranking city in Colorado is Aspen, with a score of 73. Criteria affecting the score includes housing, access to parks and medical facilities, and cost of living. Fruita's score increased overall by a couple of points. The first criterion is housing and Fruita scored 41. Standards affecting this score are housing costs, types of housing, and zero step entrances. Data is shown for 2015, 2023, as well as the national average. Mr. Vassen went on to explain that AARP uses their own data sets to compile this score. There is also a score on policies, some are rating City policies, but others are mandated by the State. The next category is neighborhood, which includes access to stores, jobs, parks, and crime in neighborhoods. This score was 50. Transportation was the next category. Its score was 54. Public transportation, ADA stations, train/bus, traffic congestion, speed limits, cost of transportation per year are all factored into this score. Environment is the next section and Fruita scored a 62. Air and water quality are both rated in this score. Health is rated next with a score of 55. Access to exercise, proximity to parks, patient satisfaction, aging action plan are all factors here. Fruita scored a 69 on Engagement which includes things like access to broadband, cost, and speed of internet. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) provides a map to internet connection speeds. Mr. Vassen explained that with the fiber option coming to town, citizens will have competitive price services and more options for internet. Voting, mail in voting as well as in person. Opportunity, has a score of 64, including: inclusion and possibilities, high school grad rate, jobs per worker and age diversity affect this score. After reviewing the scores, Mr. Karisny asked if Mr. Vassen could display the AARP Age Friendly guidebook. He explained that it went through the steps of becoming an age friendly community. Mr. Vassen said that he would send it out

to the group. Mr. Rodwick asked the AARP if they would be printing it, and they said no, it was only available in the online PDF version. Mr. Karisny asked Mr. Vassen to go to page 10, which discusses housing. It was a discussion about housing needs for groups over 50. A large part of it is accessibility. Mr. Karisny said that new housing needs to be made accessible, eliminating stairs and steps, adding first floor bathrooms, and widening doorways. Universal designs that allow all ranges of ambulatory ability in. AARP advocates for this and developers need to do this. Mr. Karisny asked if Dr. Taggart would have an interest in pursuing some of the health metrics in the Livability Index. Mr. Vassen said that he thought he would be interested in sending the data to the office. Mr. Conder had questions about the crime rate going up. Mr. Vassen explained the calls for service are going up due to the way we are tracking it. Chief Krouse presented to City Council and the crime rate is still very low. The top reasons for calls to the police are not crime related. Mr. Karisny asked if the group would like to have the Chief come in and speak to the group and everyone said yes. Mr. Vassen thought that Chief Krouse would be happy to come and answer any questions the group may have as they are trying to have more engagement with their citizens.

VII. Action Items

- a. Officer Position Appointments have been postponed to the March 21st meeting. Mr. Karisny wanted to let the group know that he is getting busier with his blue grass Americana group. He would recommend the new Chairperson to have enough availability on Saturday's to be consistent person for the Farmers Market.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.