

# Report to the Citizens



**APRIL 1, 2023**



**MARCH 31, 2024**

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- COUNCILMEMBERS**
- Randy Helms** *Council President, District 2*
  - Lynette Crow-Iverson** *President Pro Tem, At Large*
  - Dave Donelson** *District 1*
  - Michelle Talarico** *District 3*
  - Yolanda Avila** *District 4*
  - Nancy Henjum** *District 5*
  - Mike O'Malley** *District 6*
  - David Leinweber** *At Large*
  - Brian Risley** *At Large*

# Introduction

Following the municipal election in April of 2023, local government in Colorado Springs saw some big changes. We welcomed four new Councilmembers; Michelle Talarico in District 3 and Lynette Crow-Iverson, David Leinweber, and Brian Risley were elected as At Large Members on City Council. The run-off election in June also brought in a new Mayor, Yemi Mobolade, and City Administration. Mayor Yemi and City Council set off in new terrain and started working together on requesting citizen thoughts and ideas through Citywide Listening Tours. This year, City Council held numerous public hearings for significant land use items and brought several resolutions regarding state government's new proposals on local land use decisions. The new Councilmembers also brought new ideas to the table as to how our City can help our citizens' mental health and new ways to look at the planning and zoning processes of land use developments throughout Colorado Springs. As this City Council enters its second year, we look forward to continuing to advance the safety and prosperity of the citizens of Colorado Springs.

The Colorado Springs City Council in 2023  
 From left: Lynette Crow-Iverson, Nancy Henjum, Dave Donelson, Yolanda Avila, David Leinweber, Michelle Talarico, Mike O'Malley, Brian Risley, Randy Helms





# Welcome New COUNCILMEMBERS



## MICHELLE TALARICO

Michelle Talarico is Co-Owner and Director of Sales for Picnic Basket Catering, Cravings Five Star Events and Buffalo Gals Grilling Company. She has been a leader in the Colorado Springs community for over 30 years. She has served on many non-profit boards including Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Children's Literacy Center, Greenberg Center for Learning and Tolerance, The Colorado Springs Wine Festival, Colorado Springs Leadership Institute, Colorado Caterers Association, The International Caterers Association, Colorado Springs Diversity forum, and Pikes Peak Hospice and Palliative Care, and Care and Share. Michelle is a 2002 graduate of the Colorado Springs Leadership Institute program at The Center for Creative Leadership in Colorado Springs. Michelle supports the following on a yearly basis; Care and Share, National Alliance on Mental Illness, The Colorado Event Alliance, Pikes Peak Hospice, TESSA, CASA, Grace Fund, Family Affair, Pikes Peak Habitat for Humanity, Colorado Springs Symphony, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Kidpower, Homeward Pikes Peak, Energy Resource Center, Inside Out Youth Services, Goodwill, Urban Peak, Colorado Springs Conservatory, Young Life, Community Partnership for Child Development, Pikes Peak United Way, Junior Achievement, American Red Cross, Care and Share, along with many others throughout the years. Michelle was the humble recipient of the 2021 Athena Award presented by Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC. Michelle and her partner Kathy have been making a direct social impact to the Pikes Peak Region for the past 30 plus years. In April, Michelle was elected to the City Council serving District 3 for a two year term.



## LYNETTE CROW-IVERSON

Lynette Crow-Iverson was the Founder, President and CEO of Conspire!, a groundbreaking industry compliance firm. Conspire! rapidly grew to serve thousands of companies, schools, and organizations with locations across the world. Due to Lynette's experience as a trauma and cardiac nurse, combined with her keen insight into workforce trends and business needs she immediately identified a market potential for industry compliance in the safe and drug-free workplace. Lynette has been a respected authority routinely called upon by members in her industry and beyond. She served on several boards and commissions dedicated to improving, enriching, and enhancing the quality of life in Colorado Springs. Recognized as an expert in business ethics and corporate compliance, Lynette was one of the founding Mayoral Appointed Trustees for the Colorado Springs Health Foundation and served for two years as the Chair for the Pikes Peak Workforce Authority Board. Lynette has received the Women of Distinction Award from the Girls Scouts of America and the prestigious S. Jerrard Smith Community Service Award from Pikes Peak United Way. Lynette ran many successful campaigns under the John Suthers Administration to include, 2C, 2C2, PPTRA, and TOPS. Lynette was elected to the City Council At Large, and currently serves the City Council as President Pro Tem.



## DAVID LEINWEBER

David lives and breathes the outdoors, both recreationally and professionally. He has worked in the outdoor recreation industry for over 40 years, and with his wife, Becky, has owned and managed Angler's Covey, a Colorado Springs specialty fly fishing shop, guide service, and learning center for over 26 years. Over the past few years, their daughter, Rachel, has taken over most of the operations of the family business. David moved to Colorado Springs in 1991 and lived in the Village Seven community until 2004 when the Leinwebers moved to the west side. David's involvement in the local community has been a consistent thread throughout his life. In 2016, David founded the Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (PPORA), partnering with Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC and Visit Colorado Springs. PPORA works to strengthen the outdoor recreation industry for the Pikes Peak Region through leadership and collaboration. David has always felt that it is important to engage in the community and give back. In 2010, David started the Colorado Springs Fly Fishing Film Tour, an event that has raised over \$20,000 each year for Project Healing Waters, a nonprofit that serves physically and mentally disabled active-duty military and veterans in the Pikes Peak Region by providing fly fishing opportunities. In 2022, David founded a new fund under the Pikes Peak Community Foundation called "The Morning Hatch Foundation" with the mission of funding organizations and programs supporting the mental and emotional needs of the local community through transformational outdoor experiences that cultivate hope. David was elected to a four year term on the City Council for the position of Councilmember At Large in April.

## BRIAN RISLEY

Brian's diverse background and broad set of experiences brings significant value to his role on City Council. A native of Colorado Springs, Brian knows the values, goals, and expectations of Colorado communities and he knows what obstacles the Front Range has faced as it has grown. He has been directly involved in numerous issues facing our region over the years through his civic service on many boards and committees including the Colorado Springs Citizens' Transportation Advisory Board and the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority Citizen's Advisory Committee. Both through his role as the Chair of the El Paso County Planning Commission and his professional involvement as an Architect and Planning Consultant, Brian has a commanding understanding of land use matters from all sides of an issue and has a track record of skillfully finding compromise and building consensus around complex land use projects. A major component of his architectural practice includes evaluating impacts of proposed developments on the urban fabric surrounding a project and transportation and utility infrastructure related issues associated with development. Often, his architectural firm is charged with master planning a development to accommodate current needs, while considering future growth. Brian's practice has also been involved with a variety of project financing methods including public financing through local district bond and mill levy initiatives, municipal bond financing, and private equity funding. Brian is passionate about combining his professional expertise with targeted volunteer opportunities to positively impact community and drive measurable results, such as his work with the Pikes Peak YMCA as their Board Chair. Under his leadership, the YMCA embarked on a Capital Campaign that resulted in expanding the Y's mission and cause in our community through improved facilities, new service locations and enhanced connectivity to residents.





# Strategic Plan

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Partner with local governments and regional agencies in order to share knowledge and increase efficiencies in the Pikes Peak Region

- » **Organize an annual meet and greet program** with regional municipal partners including Manitou Springs, Fountain, Pueblo, Monument, etc. and attempt to identify areas of mutual concern **50%**
- » **Conduct an annual meeting** with County Commissioners, and quarterly meetings between City Council and County Commissioner leadership **75%**
- » **Continue coordination between the City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Springs Utilities** for Public Works and streets projects with a reduction in duplicative street repairs **100%**
- » **Continue engagement with military installations** through community opportunities such as Military Affairs Council with the Chamber of Commerce and the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, and establish a Councilmember as the military affairs liaison to increase direct communication with military installations **100%**

## COMMUNICATION

Increase communication with constituents at all levels of interaction in order to promote a culture of civic engagement

- » **Increase the value of Boards and Commissions** with an emphasis on action items and annual reporting requirements to City Council **75%**
- » **Develop a Constituent Response Specialist position** to increase responsiveness and consistency in public messaging **100%**
- » **Increase methods of communication to constituents** through opportunities such as town halls, policy briefs, email announcements, and social media messaging **100%**
- » **Develop a Civics 101 training for new City employees** to explain the role of City Council, the legislative process and methods of civic engagement **100%**
- » **Increase methods and frequency of communication** between Executive Staff and City Council through quarterly reports and City Council lunch updates **100%**

## SAFE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Identify legislative opportunities to enhance long range objectives with meaningful impacts

- » **Encourage connectivity across the city** through innovative approaches to transportation solutions **100%**
- » **Support Public Safety initiatives** through funding and the annual budget process **75%**
- » **Support the City's financial resiliency** through work with Executive Staff to develop a budgetary resiliency plan and associated metrics **75%**
- » **Increase public awareness** and encourage legislation that proactively supports issues of affordable housing and homelessness **100%**
- » **Increase public awareness** and support around issues of the Urban Tree Canopy and Wildland Urban Interface **100%**

## PLANCOS

Facilitate the implementation of the City's Comprehensive plan, PlanCOS

- » **Incentivize developers to build in underserved areas** of Colorado Springs, such as the Southeast, and support general infill policies and programs through development of URA criteria **100%**
- » **Actively participate in thoughtful discussion** and drafting of legislation related to PlanCOS and other planning priorities **100%**
- » **Support the Executive Branch's hiring** of a Planning and Land Use consultant to review and provide recommendations on City Code Chapter 7 **100%**
- » **Work with the Planning Department** to develop a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the processes of Special Districts, including GIS map visualizations and debt issuance overview **100%**

Percentages represent the progress of each strategic task as of April, 2024

# 2020 to 2024



# City Budget

## 2024 GENERAL FUND HIGHLIGHTS

- » **Increased funding of \$250,000** for capital costs associated with adding school zones near middle and high schools, with the goal of increasing pedestrian safety at all schools over the next several years. This increased cost will be offset by increased fee revenue.
- » **\$8.7 million for salary increases** for civilian and Police and Fire sworn employees; step and market increases for Police and Fire sworn, and pay for performance for civilian employees.
- » **\$7.5 million for full-year funding** for the portion of compensation and positions that were phased in during 2023, increased costs for Police and Fire sworn pensions, and for increased medical plan costs; net of decreases to worker's compensation and life insurance costs that have no impact on benefit to employees.
- » **Elevation of Housing and Community Vitality** to a stand-alone department, along with the appointment of a Chief Housing Officer.
- » **\$2.2 million of increased funding** for insourcing fleet maintenance in order to increase the level of service and reduce turnaround times.
- » **\$1.9 million of matched funding to leverage \$15.4 million for critical infrastructure** and transportation-related capital projects.
- » **\$1 million of increased funding for Information Technology** for updating backup technology at the Data Center and establishing a new Disaster Recovery location that will protect the City's ability to continue to provide services in the event of extreme weather, a cybersecurity attack or other disaster.
- » **\$1.3 million of continued funding** for the City's Americans with Disabilities Act operating and capital projects to maintain and improve accessibility.
- » **\$500,000 increased funding** to address Information Technology core infrastructure, applications, and cybersecurity.
- » **\$2.0 million to fund increased** rates for insurance premiums, fuel, and utilities, as well as contractual increases, including animal law enforcement services.
- » **Increased funding of \$230,000** in Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services to provide one and one-half positions to provide school programming at Rock Ledge Ranch, additional patrols at Catamount Reservoir during its closure, and additional seasonal staffing at Sertich Ice Center. These costs are directly offset by increased revenue.
- » **Increase of \$52,100** for additional services and facility maintenance at Deerfield and Hillside Community Centers. These costs are offset by increased revenue.
- » **Increased funding of \$1.3 million** in Public Works to provide two positions for traffic signal maintenance, a result of an intergovernmental agreement with El Paso County, and for six positions related to traffic control and work in the rights-of-way for telecommunications projects. Each of these positions is directly offset by increased revenue.
- » **\$170,000 of additional funding** to Mountain Metro Transit for increased contract costs to sustain transit services.
- » **\$180,000 increased funding** for security at the Downtown Transit Center.

# By the Numbers

 **17** TOWNHALLS AND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

 **1,670** CONSTITUENT RESPONSES

 **188** RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED



The City Council from our sister city in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan visited Colorado Springs in February where they presented City Council President Helms with traditional Kyrgyz attire, a kalpak (hat) and a chepkin (robe)

 **61** VOLUNTEERS APPOINTED TO BOARDS

 **520** PUBLIC COMMENTS APPROXIMATELY **26** HOURS

 **68** ORDINANCES PASSED

 **8** TOURS OF CITY HALL



Councilmember Brian Risley and Mayor Yemi at the HBA Chili Fest



District 3 Councilmember Michelle Talarico speaks to the crowd during the 2023 Juneteenth Festival in America the Beautiful Park



City Council honored former Mayor John Suthers with a resolution of appreciation during their May 9th City Council Meeting



# City Council & Mayor COLLABORATION

## A YEAR OF RETREATS, LISTENING TOURS, AND EMPLOYEE LISTENING TOURS

Over the summer, City Council and the Mayor came together for a joint meeting to help generate understanding and alignment of the City's priorities. The City Council and Mayor Retreat is an annual opportunity for City Council and the Mayor to discuss and collaborate on the issues they find most pressing for the City. The dialogue helps broker trust between the executive and legislative branches and fosters unity of effort and purpose in serving the residents of Colorado Springs. This year, topics discussed included development, land use, mental health, homelessness, economic conditions, and City department reports.

In August, Mayor Yemi and the City Council set out on a seven-stop listening tour, in partnership with Council of Neighbors and Organizations (CONO), that gathered input from residents to help set the strategic direction of the City. The tour included a stop in each of the City's six City Council districts and included an online listening session. The Listening Tours featured collaborative discussion groups with residents and City officials on important issues facing Colorado Springs, including public safety, housing, infrastructure, economic vitality, and other city services, and was a great opportunity for Mayor Yemi and the City Council to hear concerns and ideas from the community.

The Mayor and City Council also launched the CityTeam Listening Tour to provide City employees another opportunity to share their professional ideas and experiences in and around the four focus areas: public safety, infrastructure, economic vitality, and other City services. Like the Community Listening Tour, employee feedback will also help inform the development of the 2025-2029 Citywide Strategic Plan.



- » State of Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control 4/10/23
- » Annual Update from VisitCOS 4/10/23
- » City for Champions Background and Update 5/8/23
- » Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority Informational Item 5/8/23
- » Annual Update on the United States Olympic & Paralympic Museum 5/22/23
- » Careers in Construction and HBA Cares Update 6/12/23
- » City Financial Report – Q1 2023 6/26/23
- » Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center 7/10/23
- » Colorado Springs Sports Corp – 6-Month Lodgers and Auto Rental Tax (LART) Contract Update 7/10/23
- » Discussion on the Regulation of Murals and Removal of Graffiti 7/10/23
- » Colorado Municipal League Update 8/21/23
- » Cultural Affairs Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR) - 6-month Lodgers and Auto Rental Tax (LART) contract update 8/21/23
- » Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC - 6-month Lodgers and Auto Rental Tax (LART) Contract Update 8/21/23
- » Suicide Prevention Awareness Month: Overview of Suicide Prevention Efforts 9/11/23
- » City Financial Report - 2022 Wrap-up, 2023 Update, 2024 Outlook 9/11/23
- » Exponential Impact Update on the Impact of the Survive and Thrive and Accelerator Programs 9/25/23
- » UCHHealth Annual Update 10/9/23
- » Children's Hospital Colorado Update 10/9/23
- » Peak Vista Community Health Centers Update 10/9/23
- » Presentation of the 2022 PlanCOS Annual Report 10/9/23
- » Colorado Springs Police Department Public Safety Communications Center Update 10/23/23
- » Greater Resilience Information Toolkit (GRIT) Program Update 11/13/23
- » TESSA Collaboration with Colorado Springs Police Department Related to Domestic Violence 11/27/23
- » Update from Home Front Military Network 11/27/23
- » Update on Cannabis and Opioid Use in Colorado Springs 12/11/23
- » Update from Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance 1/22/24
- » Pikes Peak Regional Building Department Annual Report 2/12/24
- » Presentation from Pikes Peak Housing Network 2/12/24
- » Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management (PPEM) Updates on January Extreme Winter Response and SW Migrants 2/26/24
- » Update to the Colorado Springs City Council on Efforts to Reduce Homelessness in Our Community 2/26/24
- » Update on Golden Mill Cycle Remediation from Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) 3/11/24
- » Update from Men of Influence on Efforts to Help Prevent Violence in Colorado Springs 3/11/24
- » 2023 Financial Update 3/25/24
- » 2024 City Council Redistricting Process and Timeline 3/25/24
- » Update from Springs Rescue Mission 3/25/24

## Presentations





# Land Use Decisions

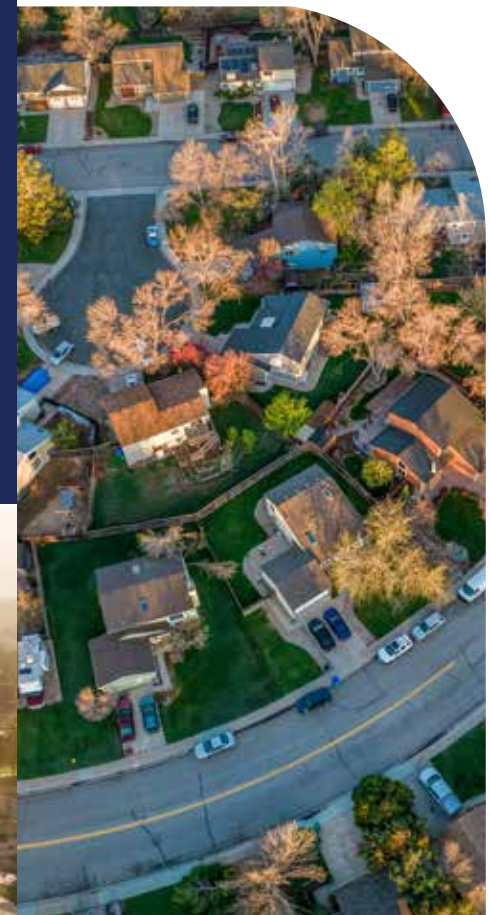
City Council received large amounts of community feedback from all of these land use projects. Legislative Services Staff worked proactively with neighborhood stakeholder groups for each hearing to ensure accurate information regarding City Council processes and procedures were disseminated to all interested residents.

- » **In August of 2023, the City Council conducted a quasi-judicial public hearing for an infill application** located off North 19th Street and Uintah Street. The application proposed creating a 50-unit permanent supportive apartment complex aimed towards homeless youth and was named the Launchpad. After a six hour public hearing, the City Council approved the development plan for the Launchpad application on a 6-3 vote.
- » **Another major application considered by City Council in November of 2023 was filed by Colorado Springs Utilities**, who proposed the replacement of an existing water tank with a larger and newer tank. After a four hour public hearing, City Council approved the development plan major modification application for the new water tank on a 5-2 vote.
- » **In February of 2024, the City Council conducted a quasi-judicial public hearing** for a proposed 232 unit affordable housing complex in the northern portion of the city named the Royal Pine Apartments. After an earlier 7-2 vote in 2023 approved the use of private activity bonds for the project, City Council conducted a five hour public hearing that concluded with City Council approving the development plan and project as a whole on a 6-1 vote.
- » **Another significant public hearing was conducted** the following evening for a proposed rezoning of 60 acres of parkland for residential uses. Project name “Ovation” ultimately hoped to create a new neighborhood with a density of six dwelling units per acre. City Council conducted a four and a half hour public hearing that concluded with City Council approving the rezoning and associated land use plan on a 6-2 vote.



## APRIL 11 RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENATE BILL 213 UNANIMOUS VOTE 9-0

The Colorado Springs City Council unanimously opposed Senate Bill 23-213, introduced by Governor Polis, citing its threat to local autonomy in crucial planning and zoning matters. City Council stressed the importance of preserving cities’ abilities to tailor solutions to their unique needs rather than being subject to a one-size-fits-all approach. The City Council unanimously passed a resolution against the bill, echoing concerns shared by over 50 municipalities statewide. At the core of the dispute were provisions requiring cities to adopt flexible standards for accessory dwelling units and middle housing, seen as an infringement on local control. The bill aimed to end single-family zoning, mandating cities to allow duplexes, triplexes, and other multifamily housing on residential land, while also prohibiting restrictions on accessory dwelling units. This sparked widespread opposition from cities and counties, with major advocacy organizations coordinating resistance efforts. The City Council’s stance reflected broader concerns about the erosion of local authority and imposition of uniform zoning policies.



## OCT 24 RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROP HH UNANIMOUS VOTE 7-0

The City Council took a firm stance against Proposition HH, a state proposal championed by Colorado Democrats aimed at reducing property tax rates while allowing the state to accumulate more excess tax revenue over the long term. City Council voiced strong opposition through a resolution, citing concerns over the measure’s potential to unjustly restrict the City’s autonomy in budget management and its ability to tailor property tax relief to local needs.

Proposition HH sought to lower the state’s assessment rate for residential properties to 6.7% from 6.765% for the subsequent decade. Projections from the nonpartisan state legislative staff estimated that this adjustment would result in approximately a \$350 reduction in taxes owed on a \$500,000 home in 2024. However, this apparent tax relief came at the expense of increasing the threshold for tax revenue retention by the state under the Taxpayer’s Bill of

continued on next page...

# Notable Resolutions





# Notable Resolutions

Rights (TABOR), a 1992 constitutional amendment designed to impose strict constraints on the state's taxing powers. By 2032, Proposition HH would have provided the state with an additional \$2 billion in annual budgetary leeway, but at the cost of significant ramifications for local budgets. The City Council expressed grave concerns about the measure's lack of oversight regarding the state's expanded budget, foreseeing detrimental impacts on local municipalities.

While Proposition HH aimed to curb the rise in Colorado property taxes, its intricate design and implications raised red flags for the City Council. They believed it would not only disrupt local budget dynamics but also gradually erode TABOR refunds, ultimately placing undue strain on taxpayers and local municipalities.

## **DEC 12** RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS OPPOSING THE GOVERNOR'S INTERFERENCE WITH HOME RULE MUNICIPAL BUDGETS UNANIMOUS VOTE 8-0

The Colorado Springs City Council unanimously took a stance against state interference by passing a Resolution in response to legislative actions affecting home rule municipalities. This Resolution highlights the State of Colorado's knowledge of escalating property values and potential tax burdens on residents, which were issues left unaddressed during the 2023 Legislative Session.

Of particular concern to the City Council was the State's directive for local governments, including Colorado Springs, to reduce their mill levy following the Special Session. This mandate clashed with the City's prior commitment to maintaining a mill levy below the TABOR limit, ensuring relief to residents without necessitating TABOR refunds. Moreover, the City of Colorado Springs had planned to provide a 0.93 mills credit to homeowners, a measure subsequently reduced by 25% to 0.70 mills to uphold budgetary balance amid legislative changes. As a home rule municipality, the City of Colorado Springs asserts its obligation to protect the interests of its citizens, resisting state directives perceived as undermining local autonomy and circumventing the will of the electorate.

## **FEB 13** RESOLUTION PROTECTING THE SECURITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE CITIZENS OF COLORADO SPRINGS

APPROVED VOTE 6-3

The City of Colorado Springs recently engaged in a debated resolution among Councilmembers regarding its stance on Sanctuary City designation. The resolution firmly asserted that Colorado Springs would not adopt the Sanctuary City status, citing the City's consistent recognition as one of the best places to live and vacation in the United States, with its cherished safety and quality of life for law-abiding citizens. Despite the City's compassionate nature, the resolution expressed concerns about observed negative impacts experienced by other American cities that embraced the Sanctuary City designation, leading to an influx of immigrants.

Additionally, the resolution emphasized collaboration with the City Administration, Pikes Peak Regional Office of Emergency Management, and El Paso County to ensure preparedness for all contingencies. It highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by the Federal Government's failure to secure the southern border, resulting in significant stress on services such as hospitals, schools, and housing, particularly in Sanctuary Cities. The resolution's authors aimed to navigate the complex intersection of immigration policy, local governance, and community welfare, reflecting on the City's commitment to both compassion and practicality.

Opposing Councilmembers argued that the resolution risked portraying the City of Colorado Springs in a negative light, potentially fostering perceptions of closed-mindedness within the community. They contended that the resolution lacked substantive action and instead served primarily as a political statement, exacerbating divisions among Councilmembers and residents alike. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for the resolution to polarize the community and undermine efforts towards inclusivity and understanding. Additionally, opponents questioned the efficacy of the resolution in addressing the complex challenges surrounding immigration policy, advocating for more nuanced and constructive approaches to address the issue. The debate within the City Council underscored differing viewpoints, the resolution passed on a 6-3 vote in favor.



Interim Public Works Director Gayle Sturdivant, Parks Director Britt Haley, Mayor John Suthers, Councilmember Dave Donelson, and Fire Chief Randy Royal celebrate the reopening of 30th Street near Garden of the Gods

# Notable Resolutions



# Ballot Item

## **JULY** TABOR FUNDS RETENTION FOR POLICE ACADEMY APPROVED VOTE 7-1

In August 2023, at the request of Mayor Yemi Mobolade, City Council approved a Resolution referring a ballot question related to a TABOR Retention for a training facility for the Colorado Springs Police Department with a 7-1 (Councilmember Donelson opposed) vote. After the Resolution was passed, the question was considered by the voters on the November 2023 ballot.

**The voters of Colorado Springs denied the question with 52.78% opposed and 47.22% in favor.**

## LEGISLATIVE DECISIONS

### **OCT** GOLD HILL MESA URBAN RENEWAL PLAN APPROVED VOTE 8-1

In October, City Council conducted a legislative hearing to determine whether the City should designate portions of Gold Hill Mesa as an Urban Renewal Zone. The City Council devoted an hour of public hearing time to review and consider this application and to hear community feedback on the proposal.

**Ultimately, City Council approved the Gold Hill Mesa Commercial Urban Renewal Plan on an 8-1 vote.**



### **JUNE** PROCESS CHANGE FOR ZONE CHANGES IN PROCESS

After the Unified Development Code (UDC) became effective in June 2023, it altered the way in which City Council heard quasi-judicial zoning items. The establishment of zoning and any subsequent zoning amendments are adopted by City Council by ordinance and require an opportunity for a public hearing. Ordinances require two readings. Under the previous City Code Chapter 7, public hearings were held on the first reading. Under the new UDC, public hearings are held on the second reading. The change prevents the potential complication of an application being approved on first reading and then having the decision reversed on second reading.

**City Council is still exploring new methods to inform residents of this change and notify interested parties for upcoming hearings.**

### **NOV** IGA BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTY TO CLEAN UP HOMELESS CAMPS PASSED 8-0

In November 2023, City Council considered an Intergovernmental Agreement between El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs for the cleanup of homeless camps within one mile of the City boundaries. The cleanup will be performed by existing Neighborhood Services Division Staff. No new positions were proposed with this Intergovernmental Agreement. The cost of the cleanup is being charged to the County based on staff hourly rates, direct cost (such as dump fees and materials) and a 10% administrative fee for indirect costs.

**After debate and consideration of amendments, the Resolution passed on a 8-0 vote.**



Colorado Springs Fire Department Homeless Outreach Program (HOP) Team helping the homeless community in Colorado Springs

# Legislative Decisions



# In the Community



District 5 Councilmember Nancy Henjum hosted a Suicide Prevention Training in partnership with Pikes Peak Suicide Prevention at Mitchell High School in January



Councilmembers Avila, Talarico, and Henjum participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for a new affordable housing project called Bentley Commons

# In the Community



Councilmembers Avila, Talarico, and Henjum participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for a new affordable housing project called Bentley Commons



During the grand reopening of the South Academy King Soopers grocery store, Councilmember Yolanda Avila with guide dog, Puma, speaks to happy citizens. Yolanda was joined on stage by City Officials and local non-profit leaders that helped the community during their times of need



City Councilmembers O'Malley, Avila, and Crow-Iverson congratulate a member of the Colorado Springs Police Department during the Valor Awards Ceremony at the Broadmoor in September (Photo Credit: Jerilee Bennett at the Gazette)



Mayor Yemi and Councilmembers Henjum, Talarico, Avila, and Leinweber enjoying their morning during the Annual Bike to Work Day in June



Councilmember Dave Donelson addresses the constituents in District 1 during this townhall in May



Mountain Metro Transit Services Manager, Lan Rao, along with Deputy Chief of Staff Travis Easton, David Beckhouse with the Federal Transit Administration, and Councilmembers Talarico, Henjum, and Avila celebrate a successful kickoff of the City's free downtown shuttle, The Zeb



District 4 Councilmember, Yolanda Avila, with interim Public Works Director, Gayle Sturdivant, and Colorado Springs Police Department Officers address residents of the Valley Hi neighborhood about their concerns in this February townhall



District 4 Councilmember, Yolanda Avila, speaks to a group of her constituents at this July townhall in Panorama Park regarding the food distribution options available to them from local partners Food2Power following the King Soopers on South Academy closing for renovations and asbestos mitigation



In February, At Large Councilmember David Leinweber and Colorado Springs Utilities CEO Travas Deal help Colorado Parks and Wildlife release a bear cub into a protected hibernation den



District 5 Councilmember Nancy Henjum speaks during a press conference for Mountain Metro Transit's successful Zero Fare summer campaign



# Boards, Commissions, & Committees



## COLORADO SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL

Boards, Commissions, and Committees

### CITY COUNCIL APPOINTED BOARDS

- » Airport Advisory Commission
- » Audit Committee
- » Citizens' Transportation Advisory Board
- » City/County Drainage Board
- » Civil Service Commission
- » Council District Process Advisory Committee
- » Downtown Review Board
- » Fire Board of Appeals
- » Historic Preservation Board
- » Independent Ethics Commission
- » Initiative Review Committee
- » Law Enforcement Transparency and Advisory Commission (LETAC)
- » Lodgers, Campgrounds and Automobile Rental Tax (LART) Citizens' Advisory Committee
- » Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Advisory Board
- » Planning Commission
- » Public Art Commission of the Pikes Peak Region
- » Stormwater Advisory Committee
- » Sustainability Advisory Board
- » Trails, Open Space, and Parks (TOPS) Citizens Advisory Committee

To apply for a City Council Board, Commission, or Committee please visit [ColoradoSprings.gov/Boards](https://coloradosprings.gov/Boards)



In efforts to improve the Lodgers and Auto Rental Tax (LART) funding award process, the LART Citizens' Advisory Committee implemented a rubric to score applications. The Committee opted to do this due to the increasing number of applications and increased transparency. The rubric reviews applications based on attracting visitors, enhancing the economy, program merit, administrative ability, and industry-specific criteria. The rubric scores are provided by agencies in the City contracted for long term visitor promotion.

- PK McPherson, Chair of LART Citizens' Advisory Committee

2023 was a year of progress for the City Planning Commission as our team began the transition into reviewing applications submitted through the recently adopted Unified Development Code. Within our monthly formal meeting, the Commission heard 122 items during over 42 hours of public hearing time. Additionally, we hosted a joint session with City Council to align Commission/Council hearing procedures and create consistency with our use of technology. As contention has risen amongst development applications across the City, we are implementing and reenforcing a standard of conduct within Commission hearings which will facilitate respect and welcome differing opinions. We strive to serve the community for the best interests of Colorado Springs for today and tomorrow's citizens.

- Andrea Slattery, Chair of the Planning Commission



It is the goal of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board to collaboratively work with the citizens of Colorado Springs on a wide variety of projects. Projects range from increasing capacity at Evergreen Cemetery, improving irrigation systems at our two golf courses and cemeteries, and actively working with the public on several master plans such as the Blodgett Peak Open Space Master Plan and the Grey Hawk Park Master Plan. The Board continues to work with staff to finish the plans for the future Coleman Community Park, grow the programming at the Westside Community Center, and review incoming development plans to ensure the rich culture of accessible parks and open spaces remain strong as our community continues to grow. The breadth of the Parks Board is wide and extremely diverse, which is a reflection of the vast interests and desires for recreational opportunities within Colorado Springs.

- Sarah Bryarly, Chair of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Advisory Board



# Colorado Springs Utilities Board

**DAVE DONELSON**  
Utilities Board Chair

**YOLANDA AVILA**  
Utilities Board Vice Chair

## OVERVIEW

City Council has the responsibility to act as the governing body for Colorado Springs Utilities (Springs Utilities), which provides electric, natural gas, water, and wastewater services to its customers. The Utilities Board, along with the CEO, is responsible for ensuring the benefits of local ownership and control to Colorado Springs citizens. It also has a responsibility to current and future customers by balancing rates, reliability, and relationships. The Utilities Board typically meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. in the Blue River Board Room on the fifth floor of the South Tower in the Plaza of the Rockies located at 121 S. Tejon Street.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, Springs Utilities' Economic Development team executed contracts to leverage commercial customer savings and accelerate business growth in the community. The Economic Development team also worked closely with the Colorado Springs Chamber and EDC, El Paso County, and the City to provide utility assessments and solutions for 56 potential new businesses interested in locating to Colorado Springs. Throughout the year, Springs Utilities was involved with 40 business retention and expansion meetings. The Economic Development team partnered with Exponential Impact, Apartment Association of Colorado Springs, Pikes Peak Small Business Development Center, Downtown Partnership, and many other local entities to support and enhance economic growth.

## PARTNERING WITH FORT CARSON

In January 2023, Springs Utilities assumed maintenance and operations oversight for streetlights, water cathodic protection, natural gas systems and electric systems for Fort Carson—with no impact to customer rates. This partnership benefits both parties, ensuring the city's economic vitality while enhancing Fort Carson's utility resilience. One year later, Springs Utilities can list accomplishments such as substantial progress in gas leak surveys, valve maintenance, substation assessments, overhead inspections, and streetlight surveys.

## CREDIT RATINGS BENEFIT CUSTOMERS

Credit ratings play a crucial role in determining borrowing costs, directly impacting the competitiveness of Springs Utilities' rates. Standard & Poor's (S&P's) Global Ratings and Moody's reaffirmed Springs Utilities' strong credit ratings in 2023. Moody's gave a rating of Aa2 and S&P was AA+. These ratings reflect the utility's robust financial position in the industry and underscore a commitment to financial stewardship.

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PLAN

### PAVING THE WAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY TRANSITION

Springs Utilities is committed to innovation as it navigates a complex energy future that includes significant changes to how energy is produced and delivered to customers. Central to its Sustainable Energy Plan, the organization is reducing its carbon emissions 80% by 2030, prioritizing access to a diverse resource mix, maintaining the reliability of the electric grid and managing costs. Highlights from this work include:

#### » DRAKE POWER PLANT DEMOLITION BEGINS, NATURAL GAS GENERATORS COMMISSIONED

The demolition of the aging Drake Power Plant has started. The decision to close the plant was based on extensive studies, considering factors like the plant's age, maintenance costs and environmental regulations.



Utilities Board Members Donelson, Crow-Iverson, Talarico, and Leinweber touring the new natural gas units adjacent to the Drake Power Plant in May.

Although the old Drake Power Plant structures will soon be removed, the site will continue to play a vital role in the utility's energy transition. The six natural gas generating units, commissioned in 2023, will stay onsite for the foreseeable future, along with the permanent substation south of the plant. The new units will support the transition to a more diverse energy portfolio and help ensure a reliable electric grid.

#### » PIKE SOLAR ADVANCES SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Just south of Colorado Springs is Pike Solar: the largest solar facility in the region. This facility became operational in 2023, covering 1,310 acres with a 175-megawatt capacity. Owned



and operated by Deriva Energy, it supplies electricity through a 17-year power purchase agreement, powering approximately 46,300 homes and businesses annually. This project underscores the utility's ongoing commitment to cleaner energy.

#### » SAVING MILLIONS THROUGH THE SOUTHWEST POWER POOL

As part of the Sustainable Energy Plan, the utility joined the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), a regional resource-sharing pool. In just one year of involvement in SPP, Springs Utilities realized \$4.7 million in cost savings. This success stems from purchasing energy through SPP below local generation costs and selling excess power.

#### » EXPANDING THE BRIARGATE SUBSTATION

A crucial step in the utility's efforts to build a resilient and reliable electric grid was achieved with the completion of the Briargate Substation expansion and transmission line capacity upgrade. The project was completed after just one year of construction. The Briargate project doubled the size of the substation and will help Springs Utilities reliably meet future energy demands.

# Colorado Springs Utilities Board



# Colorado Springs Utilities Board

## SUSTAINABLE WATER PLAN BUILDING RELIABILITY DOWN TO THE LAST DROP

Supplying Colorado Springs with clean, reliable water takes a comprehensive plan. Springs Utilities is developing new strategies, diversifying its water supply, and implementing efficiency practices to ensure a sustainable water supply for a growing community. Highlights from the Sustainable Water Plan include:

### » ONE STEP CLOSER TO SECURING ADDITIONAL WATER STORAGE

City Council approved a Memorandum of Agreement with six West Slope water entities regarding conditional water rights Springs Utilities holds in the Blue River watershed. The agreement resolves outstanding issues related to the rights and helps reduce opposition to Springs Utilities' planned project to enlarge Montgomery Reservoir, which is part of its Blue River water system.

Water from this system, which begins above Hoosier Pass in Summit County and travels many miles through tunnels and pipes to reach Colorado Springs, makes up about 10% of the community's water supply. Enlarging

Montgomery Reservoir will provide, on average, an additional 4,000 acre-feet of water annually, which can serve about 16,000 households in Colorado Springs. The project is expected to enter the permitting phase in 2025.

### » RECOGNITION FOR SUSTAINABLE WATER PRACTICES

Springs Utilities, alongside the City of Colorado Springs, received the "2023 Honor Award for Growing Water Smart" from the American Planning Association. This accolade acknowledges the collaborative efforts to implement new landscape and water efficiency regulations through RetoolCOS. These regulations mandate a 25% high-water use turf

limit for new commercial and residential developments, which were based on updated water demand forecasting methods incorporating water use by land use type. This initiative demonstrates a commitment to responsible water management and sustainability practices, contributing to the overall goal of maintaining water-smart practices while preserving economic vitality and quality of life within the community.

### » DAM REHABILITATION PROTECTS WATER SUPPLY

Preparations for rehabilitation work on South Catamount Reservoir's dam began in the fall of 2023, shortly after Crystal Creek Reservoir reopened to the public following similar work. Both reservoirs, which are operated by Springs Utilities, are in the North Slope Recreation Area of Pikes Peak.

The reservoirs hold drinking water for Colorado Springs. Both were built in the 1930s and feature unique steel-faced dams that must be resurfaced periodically to protect them from corrosion. While South Catamount Reservoir is drained, Springs Utilities will also replace the dam's infrastructure to keep it operating optimally for many years to come.

The reservoir, as well as some nearby trails, will remain closed to the public for safety reasons. The reservoir is expected to reopen to the public in 2026.



In May, Utilities Board Members and staff visited a project location where fiber optic conduit was installed in Colorado Springs



A crane systematically demolishing one of the stacks at the Drake Power Plant



A group of Utilities Board Members and Springs Utilities employees during an Energy System Tour in June



In January 2024, the Utilities Board and Springs Utilities leadership took a picture with Becky Mitchell, Colorado River Commissioner, after she provided a presentation on the Colorado River

# Colorado Springs Utilities Board



# Legislative Services

## CITY COUNCIL IS SUPPORTED BY LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

All nine Councilmembers are supported by a staff of nine who are tasked with a wide range of responsibilities including legislative research, constituent response, media coordination, scheduling, event planning, and more.

### VISION STATEMENT

Advancing the legislative priorities of the City of Colorado Springs through collaboration with Councilmembers, Executive Leadership, and members of the public.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Colorado Springs Legislative Services Staff provides non-partisan expertise and support the the City Council to inform impactful policy-making, engage constituents and stakeholders, and promote responsive local governance.

## LEGISLATIVE SERVICES STAFF

- » **Emily Evans** City Council Administrator
- » **Michael Montgomery** Deputy City Council Administrator  
*Legislative Services Employee of the Year*
- » **Carly Hoff** Senior Legislative Analyst
- » **Sam Friedman** Constituent and Outreach Program Coordinator
- » **Alex Ryden** Senior Public Communications Specialist
- » **Ayana García** Boards and Commissions Program Administrator
- » **Ashley Hughes** Staff Assistant to Council
- » **Knollan Kashner** Staff Assistant to Council
- » **Elli Harris-Mevis** Administrative Aide to Councilmember Avila



City Hall is open to the public during City Council Meetings and other Board Meetings. Councilmembers and Legislative Services Staff are accessible to constituents by appointment and are eager to speak about anything happening in their districts or across the city.

### » BECOME MORE INVOLVED

There are many opportunities for citizens to engage with local government and your elected leaders. We encourage you to become more involved in the decisions impacting life around Colorado Springs. Applying for a Board, Commission, or Committee is a great way to help shape the way our city operates. For more information, please visit [ColoradoSprings.gov/boards](https://coloradosprings.gov/boards).

### » ATTEND A COMMUNITY MEETING

In addition to City Council Meetings, City Council holds many other public forums. In 2023, these included City Council District Town Halls and Community Meetings (such as meetings about Valley Hi or Suicide Prevention Trainings). Councilmembers also attended meetings with constituents, local media, and many organizations throughout the region.

### » ATTEND A REGIONAL MEETING

In addition to serving on City Council, the Councilmembers serve as the Colorado Springs Utilities Board. Councilmembers 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.

### » SPEAK AT A MEETING

City Hall serves as a gathering space for demonstrations and other events where people congregate to recognize various public interests or concerns. All City Council Meetings are open to the public, and the Citizen Discussion portion of Regular Meetings allows the public to speak about any topic not on that agenda. Members of the public can also comment on specific agenda items during Regular Meetings.

### » REQUEST A COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmembers enjoy visiting schools and other organizations throughout Colorado Springs to educate about local government. If you would like a Councilmember to speak at a school or community event, please reach out to [719-385-5986](tel:719-385-5986) or email [AllCouncil@ColoradoSprings.gov](mailto:AllCouncil@ColoradoSprings.gov).

### » TOUR CITY HALL

Councilmembers enjoy taking time to speak with groups during tours of City Hall. Want to know more about one of the City's most historic buildings? Reach out to Legislative Services Staff and we will be happy to take groups or individuals on a tour of the majestic Colorado Springs City Hall.

### » AGENDAS AND RECAPS

To receive City Council Meeting Agendas and Recaps of the meetings please visit [ColoradoSprings.gov/city-hall-resources](https://coloradosprings.gov/city-hall-resources).

# Civic Engagement



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**TO FIND OUT WHAT CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT YOU LIVE IN, VISIT:**  
[ColoradoSprings.gov/city-council-districts](http://ColoradoSprings.gov/city-council-districts)

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