

Denver City Council Discussion about the Zoo Gasification Project

December 15, 2015

By CPFAN's Tom Korson,

An account of the December 15, 2014 City Council discussion of the proposed waste treatment plant at the Denver Zoo.

Yesterday evening, Denver City Council voted, 13-0, to approve the Denver Zoo's request for a certificate to permit its gasification project.

Nancy Francis spoke very eloquently on our objections: environmental, aesthetic, failure of the Zoo to reach out to us. A report by Denver Post reporter Jon Murray, is available at http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_27143690/city-park-neighbors-protest-denver-zoos-animal-waste

CPFAN was very capably represented by our president, Louis Plachowski, Bridget Walsh, and Hank Bootz.

Chairman Seku Nkrumah, who is running for mayor, spoke on our behalf. Nancy's presentation was interrupted by Council President Chris Herndon, who said she had run out of time. Mr. Nkrumah finished Nancy's presentation.

The Zoo was represented by its CEO, Shannon Block. Other presentations were made by other people from the zoo. Assurances were made by the Zoo that environmental concerns will be strictly monitored.

Councilman Albus Brooks addressed the issues of the Zoo's proposal, and spoke more broadly about the need for greater communication between the neighbors, including CPFAN, and other stakeholders. He acknowledged the issues involving City Loop. He agreed with our position that there should be a neighborhood accountability committee. Councilwoman Jeanne Robb spoke to how such a committee has been reasonably successful with respect to issues involving [concerts, etc.] at the Botanic Gardens.

As he announced his vote yes, Councilman Charlie Brown said that he feels that there has been a "Win-Win," namely, that there is a sincere desire on the part of the Zoo for better communication.

Scott Gilmore was present, but he did not speak. Lauri Dannemiller, Manager of Parks and Recreation, was present, but did not speak. Some of us spoke briefly with her afterward.

During the break, before the vote, I spoke briefly with Councilman Lopez (City Loop will be located in his District), who agrees with us that greater neighborhood involvement is necessary. He is very focused on art, and he suggests that it would be helpful to have art on the wall we object to, on the south side of the zoo. He also spoke about this during the hearing. During the break I told him that we have some good ideas for art (thank you, Georgia!).

The matter now proceeds to second reading this coming Monday, at which point apparently the matter will become final.

According to the article in the Post, equipment will be moved into place and the process of gasification will begin sometime late next year.

President Louis Plachowski has urged us to seize the momentum, to increase our membership, and to engage the Zoo constructively. Shannon Block was very clear that she is open to constructive engagement.

Thad Tecza, who spoke briefly during the hearing, and who is a professor (and perhaps retired) of Political Science, and who closely follows city and state government issues (he is, with Frank Sullivan, the point guy on the I-70 Reroute Committee), suggest that we make attempts to contact our Council representatives during their office hours.