

2020 State Legislative Priorities

Affordable Housing

The city will closely monitor affordable housing legislation, including bills that provide for increased funding for affordable housing projects as well as housing supportive services for vulnerable populations (e.g. homeless, mental health/substance abuse). The city will support efforts at the state level to help address both the need for affordable housing and the housing services often required of these populations.

Public Safety Communication/911

The city will support legislation related to 911 surcharges that accomplish the following:

- Modernize the legal cap of monthly 911 surcharges to match CPI. Today's cap is set at 70 cents per month and was established in 1990.
- Increase the prepaid wireless phone surcharge to likewise match CPI and adjust annually thereafter.
- Clarify language for Governing Bodies and the PUC to audit the 911 surcharges remitted by carriers on traditional landlines or cellular lines.
- Update the language to clarify eligible expenditures for the local 911 surcharge funding.

Marijuana

As in past sessions, the city will monitor closely any changes the State considers regarding the regulation of recreational marijuana consumption. In addition, the city will support local control in the authority to regulate businesses related to the processing, extraction, manufacturing and sales of consumable and industrial hemp.

Municipal Courts

As in past sessions, the city anticipates legislation in 2020 that impacts the operation of our municipal courts. As such, the city will closely monitor legislation that places limitations on the authority of municipalities to enforce their own ordinances in municipal courts.

Transportation

The city supports increased state transportation and transit funding that includes an equitable portion of new revenue to cities and other local governments.

Fire & Police Pensions

As an unfunded mandate, the city opposes proposed legislation that increases the employer contribution rate to the Statewide Defined Benefit Plan by 5% over 10 years and allows the Fire and Police Pension Association Board to require future increases without legislative approval. For the city, there would be a \$1.7M impact to the general fund over the first 8 years of the bill should it pass. In addition, the city believes the 1% increase for a new early retirement benefit allowing members to retire at 50 years of age with 30 years of service should be funded by employees. If amended to exclude unfunded contribution mandates, the city would support any proposed bill that would increase funding of the Statewide Death and Disability Plan.

Sales Tax Centralization

On average, over 70% of municipal tax revenues are derived from sales and use taxes. The city supports efforts to simplify tax collection efforts without impairing local control, including collection of remote sales taxes in a manner that complies with South Dakota vs. Wayfair. In addition, the city opposes changes to the business personal property tax that do not “backfill” reductions to local government tax revenues.

Broadband

The city will support legislation freeing up revenue to bring fast, reliable broadband to underserved and unserved areas of the state.

Water

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) has the unique ability to hold instream flow rights for the purpose of preserving the natural environment. Under certain conditions, the CWCB may accept leased or loaned water to meet instream flows. The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Conservation, and others desire to expand the CWCB instream flow program criteria. Another proposal would create flexibility to augment instream flows. While the goals of these legislative changes are well meaning, they could create conflicts and injury to other water users. During the session, Aurora Water will closely track legislation dealing with state instream flow flexibility and expansion to ensure all stakeholder issues are appropriately addressed.

The State of Colorado’s Water Plan identifies and outlines a pathway forward to address long-term water supply planning gaps. The CWCB has numerous grant opportunities and categories for funding activities and projects that work toward Water Plan goals. Part of the statewide water planning activities includes Colorado River compact issues with a current focus on drought contingency planning and exploration of demand management actions. Recently passed Ballot Initiative DD provides a new funding source for water projects but will not provide all the funding needed. Proposals are being made to direct use of the new funds and new proposals may come to address additional funding. During the session, Aurora will work with stakeholders to maintain water funding opportunities for water supply infrastructure and for projects that support Colorado River water supply reliability.

Finally, Northern Colorado communities have previously proposed and have recently revised concepts to allow water providers to temporarily share water rights. We understand the concept to be for emergency purposes and to be restricted to fully consumable water. The idea has historically been controversial on how to implement without injury to others. However, we agree that there is merit in providing water rights sharing flexibility and that the concept offers the potential to more efficiently utilize Colorado’s limited water resources. Toward that end, Aurora Water will be reviewing and working on legislative improvements to protect Aurora’s water supplies from injury and to increase the security and reliability of our system.