

In the Loop with Nancy

September 2026

Newsletter from Colorado Springs City Councilmember Nancy Henjum District 5



Happy early fall to all District 5 friends and neighbors!

I'm so glad to connect with you through this edition of my Newsletter. Each month, I share updates on city projects, events you can join, resources for residents, and stories from around our community. This month there is one deadline worth your immediate attention, two wonderful neighborhood gatherings happening right here in District 5, and a morning at Evergreen Cemetery I will not soon forget.

Grateful to serve,

Nancy

Councilmember, District 5, Colorado Springs

Project Taurus: A Decision Deferred

Council leadership and staff moved the Project Taurus appeal hearing from our chambers at City Hall to the Pikes Peak Center to accommodate the numbers expected, and that was the right call. More than 800 people attended. Many spoke. Hundreds more wrote and called.

People came for different reasons, and both sides deserve to have their perspectives described fairly.

Residents of Chelsea Glen, Kissing Camels, and the neighborhoods along Garden of the Gods Road came because they will live next to whatever is built there. Their concerns centered around noise, particularly the low-frequency kind that walls don't stop. Others were opposed because of concerns about water and energy. Still others doubted a decision this consequential was made carefully enough and in public view.

Those who came in support see a substantial private investment, with no public subsidy, that would return a large empty building to productive use in a corridor designated for industry for thirty years. Several worried that turning away a project like this would signal that Colorado Springs is not open for business. That concern is legitimate, too, though I believe manageable by determining what community benefit we want to see from data centers that want to open in Colorado Springs.

So... What exactly were we deciding

The matter before us was an appeal of the Planning Commission's July decision, which had itself denied appeals of the Planning Department's approval of a development plan for the site. An appeal hearing is not a policy debate. Our Code permits us to reverse or modify a decision only if it was contrary to the express language of the Code, erroneous, or clearly contrary to law.

That is narrow by design. It is not narrow because the other concerns don't matter.

So the vote was not a referendum on data centers, or on artificial intelligence, or on where this city's growth should go. Many speakers had serious questions about those things. I have many of the same questions. They were not the questions before us.

What happened

Council did not decide the appeal. Instead, a motion was made to postpone the matter until April 16, 2027, and it passed [7-2]. This happens to be after the April 2027 election when we will have voted for 3 at large members, a district 2 member, and a mayor.

The reasons offered for postponing were substantive: that a large electrical load study should be completed, and that more should be known about the noise this facility would produce, before Council rules. Those are the right things to want. They are also, notably, things that were not in the record in front of us. I would also like us to have a much clearer idea of the community benefits that a data center would bring – that is, not just (some) jobs and (some) tax revenue.

An amendment to set the date for March 6, which would have been before the election was offered and failed 3-6. I voted for this amendment.

I voted against the April 16 postponement, along with Councilmember Gold. But not because I thought we were ready for Project Taurus because I did not and do not. I wanted the chance to vote on the appeal itself, and postponing took that completely off the table in this hearing. Councilmembers Donelson, Gold, and I each said on the record that we would have voted to uphold the appeal. None of us got to. We will vote again on April 13, 2027, on the same appeal.

What I think actually happened, and why it matters

Something like a consensus emerged in that room, though it arrived sideways: we are not ready to decide this.

I think it's safe to say that councilmembers reached that conclusion from different directions. Some of us, like myself, thought the process that produced the approval hadn't been properly followed. Some thought the technical record, especially regarding noise, was incomplete and I agree. Some, I suspect, simply didn't want to cast this vote in an election year. Whatever the mix, seven members declined to affirm the appeal and nobody moved to deny the appeal outright.

I would rather Council had said this plainly by either voting to grant the appeal or remanding the matter back to the Planning Commission with conditions. "We don't have what we need" is a defensible thing for a legislative body to say out loud. Arriving at it through a postponement motion, without much explanation, leaves everyone guessing, including, I think, the applicant, who has done what the City asked at every stage and now waits another seven months.

Why I would have voted to uphold the appeal

My concern was narrower than most of what was discussed, and it comes down to one thing.

Our Code classifies changes to an approved development plan into two categories. Minor ones can be signed off by City staff. Major ones cannot. They must go back to the body that approved the original plan, through the same public process. The City classified this as a major change, and then approved it administratively anyway.

I don't think that's a technicality. The whole point of the major-versus-minor distinction is to decide which changes are consequential enough to require public review, and this one was classified as consequential. Having made that call, the City should have followed through.

So, this was not a vote against the Taurus Project. If this comes back and is approved after the process the Code calls for, it will rest on far firmer ground than what was in front of us.

The larger problem

I don't think many people left that room with more confidence in the process than they brought into it. That is what I most want to address.

Some of it has to do with a lack of transparency: records were requested and not produced, documents were changed after decisions were made, key questions were answered out loud rather than in writing. Part of the problem is the Code itself, which folds data centers into a general "light industry" category written long before such facilities existed.

I also take the business community's concern seriously. The choice is not between welcoming investment and protecting neighborhoods. A well-sited, well-constructed data center with real sound standards, environmental protections, enforceable monitoring, and genuine public process from the start may well have a place here. What erodes confidence is uncertainty, and the sense that decisions get made somewhere other than in public.

What happens next

The appeal remains pending. There will be some who say this was just kicking the can down the road, and that's not unfair. But if you live in the Chelsea Glen neighborhood, you feel a lot better about this delay. At least the appeal wasn't denied.

Between now and then I'll be watching whether the studies described from the dais actually get done, whether our Code is updated to address facilities like this one, and whether the record that comes back to us is more complete than the one we had. I'd also like Council to put in writing exactly what we asked for, in appropriate detail, so that in April we can measure what we get against it.

Our Parks, Our Next 15 Years. Please Weigh In by September 22.

If you have been to a neighborhood meeting with me in the past year, you have heard me talk about parks. Our parks, trails, and open spaces are a big part of why people love living here, and they are also one of the places where the gap between what we want and what we can afford shows up most clearly.



So I want to ask you for something specific this month.

The City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department has released the draft Park System Master Plan, an update to the 2014 plan that will guide decisions about parks, recreation, trails, open spaces, and cultural services for the next 10 to 15 years. The draft was built from community and staff engagement, technical analysis, and a full evaluation of the park system, and it is organized around four guiding principles:

- Preserve Our Legacy by caring for existing parks and natural resources
- Strengthen Community Connection through partnerships, recreation, and cultural services
- Create Exceptional Experiences by enhancing parks, trails, and public spaces
- Invest in Our Future by planning for long-term sustainability and growth

The plan sets goals for maintaining and improving the parks and facilities we already have, strengthening recreation and cultural programming, expanding trails and open space, improving access and connectivity, protecting natural and cultural resources, and identifying where we invest first.

Here is why your response matters more than usual. This draft comes to City Council for consideration later this year for adoption. The survey results are part of what shapes the final plan before it reaches us. When residents tell me what they want for their parks, I can carry that into the conversation, but a survey response becomes part of the official record in a way an email to me does not. Please do both. I know I am not giving you much heads to get this done, but I have been busy with data center appeals and healing from hip surgery!

Review the draft and take the survey (English and Spanish) by Tuesday, September 22:

[ColoradoSprings.gov/ParkSystemMasterPlan](https://coloradosprings.gov/ParkSystemMasterPlan)

The survey asks about the plan's vision, guiding principles, goals, and recommendations. It does not take long, and it is the most direct way to put your priorities in front of the people writing the plan.

The Parks Advisory Board received a presentation on the draft at its September 10 meeting, and two drop-in open houses were held earlier this month. If you missed those, the survey is still open and still counts. Feedback gathered now will inform the plan as it moves through the Parks Advisory Board and City Council review process later this year.

A Beautiful Morning at Evergreen Cemetery: Saluting Branches Day of Service



On September 16 I stood under an enormous American flag at Evergreen Cemetery, surrounded by a few hundred people in hard hats and high visibility vests, and I found myself quite moved.

It was a gorgeous fall morning, blue sky and the mountains clear behind us, and it was one of the more beautiful things I have been part of in this role.

Saluting Branches is a nonprofit that brings arborists and other volunteers together for a national day of service at veterans' cemeteries and other properties dedicated to those who served. Tree care professionals take a day away from their paying work, bring their own equipment and their own expertise, and give it away. Our Colorado Springs event is expected to provide more than \$150,000 worth of professional tree care at Evergreen Cemetery.

The setting matters. Evergreen Cemetery is the final resting place of more than 4,000 veterans, with veteran burials dating back to the Civil War. It also holds more than 2,800 trees, and those trees need ongoing care to stay healthy and safe. Caring for them is not decorative work. It is how a place like this stays worthy of the people buried there.

We heard from Matthew Puckett, our City Forester, from Mayor Yemi Mobolade, and from Councilmember Dave Donelson. I was honored to be asked to speak as well, and rather than give remarks of my own, I read Mary Oliver's poem "When I Am Among the Trees." Standing in a cemetery among 2,800 trees and the graves of 4,000 veterans, with a few hundred people who had come to care for those trees, her closing line about coming into the world to go easy and to shine felt like the only right thing to say.



Read the poem: ["When I Am Among the Trees" by Mary Oliver](#), from her collection *Thirst* (Beacon Press, 2006).

What struck me most was the quiet of it. These volunteers were not there for recognition. They showed up early on a workday, in a cemetery, to care for trees standing over the graves of people they never met, some of whom died more than a century ago. That is a particular kind of respect, and it does not make the news very often.

I am grateful to Saluting Branches, to every volunteer who gave a day and a skill, and to the City staff and partners who made it happen. If you have not walked Evergreen Cemetery, it is worth your time. The trees there are a little better cared for today than they were yesterday, and that is because a lot of people decided it mattered.

Hey Neighbor Community Luncheon, September 27, at Portal Park



This one is close to my heart, and it is happening in District 5.

Hey Neighbor is hosting its annual Community Luncheon at Portal Park to celebrate National Good Neighbors Day. If you have read this newsletter for any length of time, you know that neighbors showing up for one another is, to my mind, the most important work happening in this city. This is a whole afternoon devoted to exactly that.

Sunday, September 27, 2026

12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Portal Park, 3535 N Hancock Ave

There will be a family-style BBQ meal, stories from neighborhoods around the city, and a celebration of the ways people here are building stronger, more connected communities. Come hungry and come ready to meet somebody new.

Learn more about Hey Neighbor and how to get involved in your own block: heyneighbors.org

CommonSpirit Penrose Hospital Community Gathering, September 29



1,000 Neighborhood Gatherings

You're Invited!

September is Suicide Prevention Month | Rallying for Mental Health & Wellness at CommonSpirit Penrose Hospital

We invite you to join our 3rd annual community event! Come enjoy wellness activities and connect with your neighbors as we support Mayor Yemi Mobolade's city-wide initiative to combat isolation and raise mental health awareness.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2026 | 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Penrose Hospital, Main Lobby & Courtyard, 2222 North Nevada Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80907

Healthy snacks and beverages will be provided

Event Highlights

- **Special Visit from Mayor Yemi Mobolade**
- **Wellness Stations:** Free blood pressure and balance screenings
- **Live Entertainment:** Performance by a live pianist
- **Engagement:** EMS demonstrations and ambulance service tours
- **Community Fun:** Therapy dog meet-and-greets, wellness classes, courtyard pickleball, and scavenger hunts with raffle prizes
- **Education:** Injury Prevention materials including Fall Prevention, "Stop the Bleed" and Suicide Prevention
- **Giveaways:** Commemorative swag, ice packs, and mini first aid kits



Scan the QR code for registration.

Community Fun | Pickleball, Wellness Class Schedule & Locations

Pickleball	10 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Free to the community	Courtyard (weather permitting)
Barbell Mix	12:05 - 12:30 p.m.	Free to the community	E Tower Basement/Wellness Center
Core & Stretch	12:35 - 1 p.m.	Free to the community	E Tower Basement/Wellness Center

For questions regarding community classes, please contact: Kristine Barrett (719) 331-2161 or kristine.barrett@commonspirit.org



Also in District 5, and also worth your time.

CommonSpirit Penrose Hospital is hosting its third annual community event as part of the Mayor's 1,000 Neighborhood Gatherings initiative to combat isolation and raise mental health awareness. September is Suicide Prevention Month, and this gathering is built around wellness and connection.

Tuesday, September 29, 2026

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Penrose Hospital, Main Lobby and Courtyard, 2222 North Nevada Avenue

Healthy snacks and beverages will be provided. Highlights include:

- A visit from Mayor Yemi Mobolade
- Free blood pressure and balance screenings
- EMS demonstrations and ambulance tours
- Therapy dog meet-and-greets, scavenger hunts, and raffle prizes
- Live music from a pianist
- Injury prevention education, including Fall Prevention, Stop the Bleed, and Suicide Prevention materials
- Commemorative swag, ice packs, and mini first aid kits

Free community fitness classes are also open to everyone:

- Pickleball, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., in the courtyard, weather permitting
- Barbell Mix, 12:05 p.m. to 12:30 p.m., E Tower Basement Wellness Center
- Core and Stretch, 12:35 p.m. to 1:00 p.m., E Tower Basement Wellness Center

Registration is available by scanning the QR code on the flyer. For questions about the community classes, contact Kristine Barrett at (719) 331-2161 or kristine.barrett@commonspirit.org.

I am glad to see an institution as significant as Penrose opening its doors this way. Isolation is a real and growing problem in our city, and the answer to it is not complicated. It is people in the same room.

New in Colorado: Plug-in "Balcony Solar"



Those of you who follow my work on the Utilities Board know that residential solar has been a major focus for me over the past year, particularly making sure the roughly 10,000 households who invested in rooftop solar are genuinely heard as rate policy changes. That work continues.

In the meantime, here is a development I am glad to be able to share, because it opens a door for people who have never had one.

State law now allows Colorado residents to use small solar systems designed to plug directly into a standard wall outlet. They are often called "balcony solar" or "patio solar" because the panels can go in smaller spaces where rooftop solar is not practical. Designs vary, but most systems are simply a solar panel, an inverter, and a cord that plugs into an outlet.

What that means in practice:

- Offsets a portion of your home's electricity use with clean, renewable energy
- Fits in small spaces, which makes solar accessible to renters for the first time
- May help reduce your monthly utility costs
- Lets you generate some of your own electricity without the cost of a rooftop system
- Offers a low-commitment way to try residential solar before investing in something larger

That second point is the one I keep coming back to. For twenty years, the conversation about residential solar in our city has effectively been a conversation for homeowners. A renter in an apartment near Cragmor or along North Nevada had no practical way in. This changes that, and I think it matters.

Colorado Springs Utilities does not require approval or charge a fee for qualifying devices.

Learn more about [plug-in solar options](#) on the Colorado Springs Utilities website:

Stay in Touch

As always, if something in this newsletter raises a question, or if there is something happening in your neighborhood I should know about, please write to me at nancy.henjum@coloradosprings.gov. If your District 5 neighborhood has not yet had a meeting with anyone from the city and you would like to get organized, reach out and let's talk about what that could look like.

Grateful to serve,

Nancy Henjum

Councilmember, District 5, Colorado Springs

nancyforcos.org