

COUNCIL PRE-MEETING
Tuesday, April 20, 2021 5:30 p.m.
Casper City Hall - Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Financial Audit
2. Hogadon and Ice Arena Rates
3. Agenda Review

Mayor Freel began the pre-meeting session at 5:35 p.m. with Councilmembers Cathey, Engebretsen, Gamroth, Knell, Lutz, Pacheco, Pollock and Mayor Freel in attendance. Absent: Johnson.

City Manager Napier introduced the topic of the financial audit and requested further information from staff. Jill Johnson, Financial Services Director, provided a detailed report on the findings of the audit. She explained that there have been major software and personnel changes, and that these changes will put in place the expertise and tools necessary to make improvements to the financial processes of the City. Council did not have any questions or comments.

City Manager Napier spoke briefly about the proposed fees for Hogadon ski basin and the Casper ice arena. Tim Cortez, Parks and Recreation Director, shared further information about the fee structures, being competitive within the region, and making these facilities more sustainable.

Councilmember Knell asked about extending the season at Hogadon in the spring. Mr. Cortez indicated that they may lose some money or break even with costs if the season was extended because most people start doing other outdoor activities in the spring and have lost interest in skiing.

Councilmember Gamroth asked if changing the cost of the pre-season pass may hurt pass sales. Mr. Cortez said that the pass has good value, including reciprocity with other facilities, and there will still be incentive to buy a season pass in the pre-season.

Councilmember Gamroth inquired about having a management company run Hogadon. Mr. Cortez stated that is a possibility and perhaps Spectra may be interested in bundling their management of the Ford Wyoming Center with Hogadon after their current contract is up in another year and a half. He said that the difficulty with a management company is the cost of the management on top of all the maintenance and other costs of the facility.

Councilmember Cathey spoke about his direct experience with people losing interest in skiing during the spring and the value in having reciprocity for pass holders.

Councilmember Knell spoke in favor of the fee changes.

Councilmember Pollock asked for confirmation on the rates that are increasing slightly. Mr. Cortez verified the changes, but emphasized that the majority will be a reduction in the discounts offered.

Councilmember Gamroth inquired about the value of our ski area compared to places like Snow King. Mr. Cortez shared that our ski area is very affordable and convenient for locals, that the season pass is a good value, and that the pricing needs to help the facility to be sustainable.

City Manager Napier asked Mr. Cortez to elaborate on the projections and how the Hogadon subsidies have been changing. Mr. Cortez said that two years ago Hogadon required just over \$300,000 in subsidies, and a year ago sales were up because of COVID. He estimated that this year the subsidy would be under \$300,000 and going forward based on projections and the proposed changes, the subsidy would be around \$200,000.

City Manager Napier stated that if Council is serious about reducing operational subsidies, then decisions to update fee structures need to continue to happen, and that removing roughly a third of the subsidy involved in operating Hogadon is a good step.

Councilmember Knell shared his support of the proposed changes.

Mayor Freel moved on to agenda review, and there were no questions or concerns.

Mayor Freel adjourned the pre-meeting at 6:02 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Steven K. Freel
Mayor