

COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Tuesday, November 30, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.
City Hall – Council Chambers

AGENDA

1. Council Meeting Follow-up
2. Mayoral Straw Poll
3. Sole Source Purchase – Custom Pumper for Fire EMS Department
4. Open Container Debrief
5. Platte River Trails Trust – PV Bridge Project
6. Sole Source Purchase- Front Wheel Loader
7. Agenda Review
8. Legislative Review
9. Council Around the Table

Mayor Freel called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. with the following Councilmembers present: Cathey, Engebretsen, Gamroth, Knell, Pacheco, Pollock, Quest and Mayor Freel. Councilmember Johnson was absent.

1. Council Meeting Follow Up

City Manager Napier did not have any follow-up items.

2. Mayoral Straw Poll

City Manager Napier explained that, once a year, the Council must select a new Mayor and a new Vice Mayor. City Attorney Henley explained that staff was proposing a system of ranked choice voting.

Councilmember Cathey said that ranked choice voting seemed unnecessary, and suggested that the person with the lowest votes should simply withdraw, and then the council could hold a second vote among the remaining candidates. Mr. Henley said that this might cause some embarrassment to the candidate that was forced to withdraw, but the straw poll could certainly be run in this way.

Councilmember Knell said that he had withdrawn his name from consideration for Vice Mayor. He also expressed his objection to the current process, which allowed one person to be nominated for both Mayor and Vice Mayor. He also objected to how the Vice Mayor and the Mayor meet, prior to most meetings, separately with the City Manager.

Vice Mayor Pacheco disagreed with Councilmember Knell's assertions and explained the purpose of the leadership meetings. Vice Mayor Pacheco then withdrew from consideration to serve as Vice Mayor in 2022.

Mayor Freel also expressed his concerns with the comments made by Councilmember Knell regarding the leadership meetings. Mayor Freel then withdrew his name from consideration for Mayor; he explained that he had served as mayor twice, and his withdrawal would allow for new blood to enter the leadership.

Councilmember Knell indicated that the leadership meetings before the Council meeting were perceived as suspicious, and they often caused the actual meeting to begin late.

Councilmember Cathey said that he did not object to Councilmember Knell's comments. Councilmember Cathey pointed out that the public has objected to other practices of the Council, such as texting while on the dais. The objections arose because some members of the public had suspicions that the Councilmembers were texting one another during the meeting as a way to communicate without having their comments put into the public record.

Councilmember Quest stated that people are always suspicious of leadership, but that responses to these people should be respectful to Council and emphasized that Councilmembers must always strive for professionalism and decorum.

City Attorney Henley asked Mayor Freel to confirm his withdrawal from the Mayoral ballot; Mayor Freel confirmed. Mr. Henley also asked Vice Mayor Pacheco to confirm his withdrawal from the Vice Mayoral ballot; Vice Mayor Pacheco confirmed.

With two candidates remaining for consideration on the Mayoral ballot, the ballots were distributed for Mayor. After the count, City Attorney Henley announced that Vice Mayor Pacheco had been selected to become the new Mayor per the current straw poll.

A ballot was then distributed for the Vice Mayoral election. After the count, City Attorney Henley announced that Mayor Freel had been selected to become the new Vice Mayor per the current straw poll.

3. Platte River Trails Trust Budgeting – Paradise Valley Pedestrian Bridge

City Manager Napier explained that the Paradise Valley Pedestrian Bridge project was budgeted to be built in the current fiscal year, however, the new cost estimate for the project had increased since the original budget was approved. The Platte River Trails Trust (Trust) was therefore seeking the authority to spend its fiscal year 2023 One Cent 16 monies in fiscal year 2022. He pointed out that the actual dollars would not be leaving the City until sometime in fiscal year 2023, but still, budgeting practice would tend to require that the monies be moved from one year to the other.

Councilmember Cathey noted that the Trust seemed to be behind on its fundraising goals, so he asked if the Trust was still working on its fundraising. Angela Emory, the director of the Platte River Trails Trust, answered that fundraising was indeed ongoing, but she felt confident that the full amount would be raised. Councilmember Cathey suggested that the early authorization of One Cent 16 funds should be made, but that it should be contingent on the Trust finishing its fundraising. Council agreed to grant the early expenditure of funding, contingent on the fundraising success of the Trust.

4. Sole Source Purchase of a Reserve Pumper Firetruck

City Manager Napier said that the Fire-EMS Department was looking to purchase a used firetruck, via sole source, that could serve as a backup firetruck. The cost would be \$36,000.

Deputy Chief Jason Speiser explained that the truck being considered was manufactured in 1998 but it had only 36,000 miles on its odometer. The truck is quite similar to those in their current fleet, so it would be compatible with the stations and easy for the City's firefighters to use.

Councilmember Engebretsen asked how often the backup trucks are used. Deputy Chief Speiser said that the backup trucks are used quite frequently, and he added that this is because repairs to the primary firetrucks can take weeks to complete, especially if needed parts must be shipped in from distant places.

Councilmember Cathey asked how many engine hours were on the truck. Deputy Chief Speiser said that the engine had only a little more than 3,000 hours. Councilmember Cathey agreed that this was a low number, but he said that he had felt compelled to ask because trucks might spend a lot of time idling during an emergency event. As such, they might accumulate many engine hours without necessarily accumulating many road miles.

Council agreed to support the current purchase of this firetruck.

5. Open Container Debrief

Councilmember Pollock recused herself at 5:27 PM.

Police Chief Keith McPheeters provided a review of the open container events that had occurred throughout the summer.

- He noted that his intent had been to have uniformed officers at all of the open container events, but he acknowledged that those officers were often diverted to other emergencies.
- He said that the open container events didn't seem to cause other crimes or disruptions. He noted that on Thursday nights, some regular problems began to occur later in the evenings at David Street Station, but the Chief also said that those disruptions were probably not specifically related to the open container events.
- He said that he personally witnessed individuals who had brought their own alcohol to the open container events even though the rules of such events would ban BYOB. Those individuals uniformly said that they didn't know that it was disallowed to bring their own alcohol.
- He noted that the events did tend to generate litter despite the availability of public trash cans.
- He said that, after 9:00 PM, very few attendees would be at these events. He said that this was constant across almost all of the events.
- He said that the wristbands and containers, which were supposed to indicate which people and cups were authorized, tended to lead to confusion. Many events would have multiple types of wristband and multiple types of cup.

Chief McPheeters, as a result of these findings, made a few recommendations:

- He asked that the events always be scheduled to end at 9:00 PM.
- He asked that \$25,000 of overtime be specifically budgeted for the Police Department so that they could better afford the staffing of these events.
- He asked that wristbands be better managed. He asked that wristbands be marked with the name of the vendor, and that they be the specified color for that week, as set by the City Clerk's Office.

Public Services Director Andrew Beamer also reported on the impacts to his department:

- He noted that setting up the boundaries for these events required hours of time both before and after each event.
- He also noted that trash impacts were felt by Refuse Collection staff.

Councilmember Knell asked the Chief why there would be a need for overtime officers at these events in the future, given that the events appeared to be causing not crimes. Chief McPheeters said that having the officers on site was helpful for deterrence.

Councilmember Gamroth asked to be refreshed on why the City was being asked about open container issues. City Manager Napier said that the City had been approached by local businesses about the opportunity to host this sort of event. Councilmember Gamroth asked if a survey could be done to see how the business owners now felt about these events – whether they felt that the events were worthwhile, and specifically, whether the events were worth the possible \$25,000 cost.

Vice Mayor Pacheco suggested that, if the events were going to end at 9:00 PM, then perhaps they could be allowed to begin earlier, perhaps as early as 9:00 AM. Chief McPheeters said that the additional hours would be some burden on his department, but otherwise, he said that the Department would certainly be responsive to the Council's wishes. Vice Mayor Pacheco thanked the Chief for his response, and he asked if there would be a problem with allowing such events to start earlier in the day. Chief McPheeters said that it would be feasible, but might cost more in terms of staff time. Vice Mayor Pacheco added that many events, like at the Christmas Parade, could be converted to open container events, especially since many people might already be drinking at those events. He suggested that it wouldn't be difficult to staff those events since the Police would already be on site.

Mayor Freel said that some of the vendors objected to having to have wristbands that were both color coded and labeled with the vendor's business name. The vendors expressed concern that they might have to overbuy armbands that then go to waste, so instead, maybe the vendors could be given one color for their establishment, and then each server would just write the date of the event directly on the wristband. Chief McPheeters said that staff had discussed this issue at length. He said that one of his concerns was having his officers stopping and detaining people just to check the dates on their wristband. He added that the plan was to only have four colors of wristband for the whole summer which would allow the vendors to have a tranche of wristbands for multiple events across multiple weeks.

Councilmember Engebretsen suggested that maybe the vendors shouldn't be required to put the vendor's logo on the wristband. Chief McPheeters said that having the vendor logo on the wristband allows police officers to know where the drinker received their wristband, which could be useful if the drinker appeared underage or overserved. Councilmember Engebretsen also asked about the possibility of the City purchasing.

Council agreed that discussion of these issues would be saved for the spring of 2022. Councilmember Pollock returned to the meeting at 5:56 PM.

6. Wheel Loader Sole Source Purchase

City Manager Napier said that the Solid Waste Division was looking to buy a used wheel loader for \$198,504. Andrew Beamer, Public Services Director, explained that the purchase of this used CAT loader would be done instead of purchasing a new loader, which would likely cost roughly \$270,000. In addition, the loader in question has already been in use at the Balefill for three months. He said that the seller was offering to waive the three months of rental payments if this sale is approved.

Councilmember Knell asked if the funds were budgeted in FY22. Mr. Beamer confirmed that they were. Council agreed to move ahead with the purchase.

7. Agenda Review

City Manager Napier went over some upcoming agenda items, including the budget calendar, and the use of the Source Gas property by the Health Department.

Councilmember Cathey asked about the formal action to purchase the firetruck. City Manager Napier said that he would confirm the need for the Council to reconsider the purchase formally, but if necessary, it would be added to the agenda. Councilmember Cathey noted that some of the pre-meeting agendas were becoming rather crowded especially the agenda for December 7th.

Councilmember Knell asked if the Council should add a discussion of building inspection enforcement, especially in cases when work was done without proper permitting in advance of the work. Council agreed to add that item to a future work session agenda.

Councilmember Gamroth asked about the CY Avenue Trees item, which was on the grid for December 14th. City Manager Napier explained that this discussion was intended to be about the so-called “majestic trees,” which are quite large and quite old. He said that Council would be asked for policy guidance on this topic, especially since old trees sometimes grow ill, but the public is hesitant to remove them.

Councilmember Quest noted the lack of an agenda item on the airline subsidy. City Manager Napier explained that the airport is a county operation, and as such, there was nothing to discuss at this time. Councilmember Knell added that the County was likely to ask for the City’s assistance on this issue at some point.

8. Legislative Issues

City Manager Napier said that he had nothing to discuss regarding the legislature.

9. Around the Table

Councilmember Knell specifically addressed the Mayor and Vice Mayor regarding the earlier discussion of the leadership meetings. He also noted that the Christmas Parade had been a wonderful event, but he asked if it would be possible to extend the route in future years so that more families could have the shoulder space to see it.

Councilmember Cathey also congratulated staff for a well-run parade.

Councilmember Quest complimented staff for responding quickly to a safety issue at a play structure in one of the city's parks.

Councilmember Pollock commented on her recent attendance at a youth meeting by saying that it had been a good experience, and that the city should seek to have more events of that sort. Regarding the parade, Councilmember Pollock suggested that next year's parade might be redesigned to better emphasize Small Business Saturday.

Councilmember Engebretsen congratulated Vice Mayor Pacheco and Mayor Freel for their election to their new positions in council leadership.

Councilmember Gamroth also expressed his appreciation for the recent youth event. He noted that posting legal notices in newspapers might not be required given the dismissal of a recent lawsuit. He congratulated the Casper Housing Authority for their national recognition of being able to spend their ARPA funding.

Vice Mayor Pacheco addressed members of the Youth Council in attendance and reminded them to keep fighting for decency and respectful behavior in government.

Mayor Freel commented on his withdrawal from the Mayoral election. He said that he appreciated the chance to serve as Mayor for the last two years and that it has been eventful, especially given the impacts of COVID. He said that he appreciated being selected to the position of Vice Mayor. Mayor Freel also commented on the Christmas Parade, and in particular, he felt proud for how many attendees there were, and the excitement of those attendees.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Steven K. Freel
Mayor