

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
City Hall – Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Council Meeting Follow-up
2. Health Department Update
3. Metro Animal Shelter Generator Project
4. Casper Area Transit Electric Fleet Conversion Study Update
5. Council Leadership Selection Process
6. Creation of LAD 159 – Westridge Improvements
7. Legislative Update
8. Agenda Review
9. Council Around the Table

Mayor Knell called the work session to order at 4:31 p.m. with the following Councilors present: Cathey, Pollock, Engebretsen, Haskins, Jensen, Vice Mayor Pacheco and Mayor Knell. Councilors Gamroth and Bond attended the meeting virtually.

1. Council Meeting Follow-up

There were no items for Council follow-up.

2. Health Department Update

City Manager Napier introduced Anna Kinder, Executive Director of Casper-Natrona County Health Department, to update Council on the activities at the Health Department. Ms. Kinder reviewed the department's operations, including funding, staffing, and services. She discussed programming, including environmental health, communicable disease programming, maternal/child health, testing, and cancer navigation. She also discussed upcoming programming that focus on issues such as blood pressure checks, healthy choices, HIV prevention, wastewater analysis, diabetes complications, and primary care locators. She explained that they are searching for funding for a health navigator position, which would be focused on connecting citizens to resources. She also discussed the department's focus on a behavior intercept model for mental health and substance abuse, working on being a training site for community health workers, and emergency preparedness. She stated that the department is having issues related to staffing due to lack of funding. Council discussed helping the Health Department with grants and grant writing.

3. Metro Animal Shelter Generator Project

Next, City Manager Napier discussed purchasing a generator for Metro Animal Shelter in order to maintain a continual power supply at the facility. He explained that there have been issues at the shelter caused by electric bumps and the aging facility, which is of concern because this could cause a lack of air conditioning this summer for the animals. He then introduced Police Chief McPheeters and Lieutenant Tremel to expand on the project. Chief McPheeters stated that the Police Department is seeking Council's support to put out an RFP (request for proposals) for the

generator and engineering for the project. He stated that the funding will come from the Metro Animal Reserve Fund, and he expects that the total cost for the project will be around \$105K. Council gave their thumbs up in support of the Police Department putting out an RFP for the project.

4. Casper Area Transit Electric Fleet Conversion Study Update

Next, City Manager Napier discussed the Transit Electric Fleet Conversion Study. He stated that the federal government strongly encouraged this study to be done in order to receive future funding. He then introduced Liz Becher, Community Development Director, and Beth Andress, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Supervisor, to elaborate on the study. Ms. Becher and Ms. Andress stated that the Federal Transportation Agency (FTA) requested the City commission a feasibility study for electrification of the fleet in a phased format. This study is 90% federally funded, and the remainder of the funding comes from the MPO. HDR Engineering, Inc. was chosen as the consultant to develop the Zero Emission Bus Transition Strategy, and they have been in Casper over the last couple of days to review elevations, weather, garage space, and electrical access.

Ms. Andress introduced two consultants from HDR Engineering, Inc. to review the project. They explained that the purpose of the study is to analyze the existing fleet, outline how electrical vehicles could be introduced, identify transition costs, and to identify and prepare for future funding opportunities. The purposes will also align and support Council goals. They explained that significant amounts of federal funding have been allocated to zero emission/low emission fleet transitions, and the FTA is shifting towards funding for electrified fleets. This means that more money will be given to low emission or no emission fleets. They then reviewed the different types of electric buses and why some vehicle types may do better in cold weather and with long routes. They reviewed the existing conditions of the transit fleet, and stated that their market assessment is that the current range of electric buses may not satisfy some of Casper's existing service levels. They met with WYDOT, and ensured that they will serve as the pass through for federal funding. They also met with Rocky Mountain Power about the grid structure and charging needs, and were assured that there is power to support an electric fleet. They reiterated that they are not doing this study to dictate fleet transitions, but rather to support the MPO in pursuing funding. They explained that a plan must be developed in order to receive federal funding for zero emission transit vehicles. The consultant's job is to develop an FTA-compliant plan, so that if the City does want to apply for federal funding for these vehicles in the future they will be able to.

The consultants are currently in the process of gathering data and plan to have the study completed in May. Councilor Cathey asked about hydrogen-powered fleet vehicles, and the consultants responded that this is not available yet, but they will build future possibilities for hydrogen vehicles into the plan. Councilor Bond asked about hybrid buses, and the consultants responded that these would qualify for low-emission vehicle funding and may be a viable option for Casper. They also discussed the maintenance and charging needs of the electric vehicles, as well as the life of the vehicles and chargers. Ms. Andress stated that the consultants will be available in the City Hall lobby from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. tonight to answer questions from citizens.

5. Council Leadership Selection Process

Next, City Manager Napier discussed the possibility for Council to create a policy for the straw poll process used to select the Mayor and Vice Mayor each year. He stated that staff would like direction on how the straw poll takes place and how the results are revealed to the public. He then introduced Fleur Tremel, Assistant to the City Manager/City Clerk, to explain the current process. Ms. Tremel explained that for the last couple of years, Council has used a ranked choice ballot which is tallied privately by the City Clerk and City Attorney; the results are announced by the City Attorney and City Clerk after the ranked choice ballots are tallied. Council discussed the pros and cons of the current process. Councilor Engebretsen suggested that those who are nominated and interested in being Mayor and Vice Mayor be given five minutes to explain why they would like those leadership positions before ballots are cast. Council discussed the pros and cons for using a ranked choice ballot as opposed to a run off process.

City Attorney Nelson explained that the actual vote for Mayor and Vice Mayor takes place during the first meeting of the year, and this is done in a public meeting with a public vote. However, state statute allows for the straw poll to be completed in an executive session. Council discussed the pros and cons for completing the straw poll in an executive session. City Attorney Nelson explained that if the straw poll is completed in an executive session, the ballots are deemed executive session materials and the public is therefore not able to request those materials. However, if the straw poll takes place during a work session, the ballots could potentially be requested in a public records request. Councilor Gamroth stated that he would advocate for the entire process to take place during a work session to provide transparency. The majority of Council gave their thumbs up to a ranked choice ballot; a public five-minute explanation from those Councilors on the ballot in a public work session; an executive session straw poll with incoming Councilors voting in the straw poll; and a publication of the results of the straw poll after the executive session in the work session. They also gave their thumbs up to continuing the nomination process whereby the City Clerk collects nominations and finalizes the ballot with those Councilors wishing to accept their nomination. They also gave their thumbs up to continuing to have the City Clerk and City Attorney tally the ranked choice ballots. Council directed staff to prepare a resolution for formal consideration at a regular Council meeting to memorialize this process.

6. Creation of LAD 159 – Westridge Improvements

Next, City Manager Napier introduced Andrew Beamer, Public Services Director, to discuss the possibility of a local assessment district (LAD) for improvements in the Westridge Subdivision. Mr. Beamer explained that the total project cost for the Westridge improvements is \$2.2M, and the LAD assessment would be for curb and gutter and sewer service lines during that improvement project. The average cost to the property owners would be \$6.4K with an average annual assessment of \$750 per year per household. He stated that the general consensus from the neighborhood was favorable for the LAD. He explained that the assessments are based on street frontage, with the exception of corner lots where the assessment for the longer leg of street will be split evenly between all of the property owners. He then reviewed the process for the LAD, stating that next week a resolution for the notice of intent to create the LAD will be considered at the regular Council meeting, then a formal notification of neighbors will take place, then there will be

a public hearing and three readings for the ordinance. The neighbors are given the ability to object to their assessment amount and the LAD. If a majority of property owners are in favor, the LAD is moved forward if approved by Council. Council gave their thumbs up to move forward with the LAD process.

7. Legislative Update

Next, City Manager Napier updated Council on the legislative session. He stated that staff found out today that a number of the amendments that would have been negative for Casper failed, and the direct distribution from the original budget looks like it will pass. He then asked Jolene Martinez, Assistant to the City Manager, to update Council on the progress of other bills. She stated that the item for an outdoor recreation trust fund passed on 3rd reading and the public improvements bills passed on 2nd reading. The prescription drug transparency act also passed on 2nd reading which will cause a steep increase in prescription drug prices for citizens, including City employees. She asked that Council send emails asking legislators not pass this on 3rd reading. She then discussed interim topics that Council had asked staff to find sponsorship or support for. She stated that the Wyoming Association of Municipalities felt that this was not the right strategic time to move forward with the local revenue source topic. Senator Landen and Representative Washut are going to sponsor the judiciary topics and will take those to the judiciary committee. WAM also stated that are willing to take on the state liquor law adoption and minutes publication items. Mayor Knell discussed the City receiving \$2M for a wastewater project from the State after he, City Manager Napier, and Public Services Director Andrew Beamer asked for Casper to be reconsidered for this funding.

8. Agenda Review

Next, Council reviewed the agendas for upcoming regular Council meetings and work sessions.

9. Council Around the Table

Next, Council went around the table to discuss their respective board and committee meetings as well as matters of public interest.

The work session was adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Bruce Knell
Mayor