

COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Tuesday, August 8, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.
The Lyric

1. Meeting Follow-up
2. Community Readiness Grant & Loan Application
3. Rec Enterprise Business Plans Part 3 – Ice Arena & Recreation Center
4. Speed Limit Ordinance Review
5. Agenda Review
6. Legislative Review
7. Council Around the Table

Mayor Knell called the work session to order at 4:41 p.m. with the following Councilors present: Pollock, Engebretsen, Haskins, Jensen, Cathey, Gamroth, Bond, Vice Mayor Pacheco and Mayor Knell.

1. Council Meeting Follow-up

There were no items to discuss for meeting follow-up.

2. Community Readiness Grant & Loan Application

City Manager Napier began by discussing the development of a Master Plan for the land around the Ford Wyoming Center and WYOSports Ranch. He explained that this is a critical step of pursuing funding to develop the area in respect to infrastructure. The area currently does not have any of the needed utilities which include sewer and water. Staff asked Council to consider a \$5M grant coupled with a \$5M loan application to the Wyoming Business Council through their Community Readiness Program for the investments necessary to develop the land under the North Platte River Park Master Plan. The program is designed to assist in financing public owned infrastructure and has an application deadline of November 1st. He then introduced Cindie Langston, Acting Public Services Director, and Alex Sveda, City Engineer. Ms. Langston discussed the costs estimated for water, sewer, and drainage due to storm water runoff in the area. Mayor Knell asked if the estimates included oversight in case of shortfalls that could come from inflation including material cost increases. Mr. Sveda said the estimates presented are based on current material and labor prices. Ms. Langston elaborated that with Council's approval to move forward, a timeline of six months to a year would keep estimated costs close to what has been presented. City Manager Napier added staff has advised that a formal utilities and traffic study be done in preparation of the application process and explained those items would help to solidify the estimated costs. Councilor Engebretsen asked if overall expenses would be returned to the City after the land in that area is sold to private business. City Manager Napier responded that that would be the expectation of the development plan. Councilor Pollock asked when the City last applied for a Community or Business Readiness Grant and what was the scope of that project. City Manager Napier mentioned a proposal made three years ago to the Business Council for improvements near the river area around 1st Street and Poplar Street for infrastructure development, but that did not happen. He said this project has more potential with the WYOSports Ranch development already taking place, and it provides for great synergy in the proposal to the Business Council for funds. Councilor Bond asked for confirmation that the 20% contingency cost

in the estimate would provide for increases in material costs and other unknowns. Mr. Sveda confirmed that was accurate. Councilor Cathey asked about the lack of electricity in the proposal and exhibits. City Manager Napier responded that any power improvements made are not assets that the City will ever own, and therefore, a development of that kind would not be something the City would make application for or do. He further explained that the Sports Ranch does have solid estimates of costs to place power and natural gas lines in the area. Councilor Cathey expanded on the question and explained his worry of additional work and damage that could happen with the installation of gas and power lines after streets and curbs have been installed and finished with the presented plan. City Manager Napier agreed on the need be cognizant of this.

Councilor Gamroth asked where the funds for the remaining \$4.7M in the estimate would come from. City Manager Napier said there is a possibility to look at a myriad of programs that are available and the City may be able to make a compelling enough application for more than just the 5 and 5 from the Business Council with other grant funding as well as utilization of the current partnership with WYOSports Ranch. Councilor Gamroth then asked for further data detailing the return on investment on this project. City Manager Napier introduced Ms. Powers with the WYOSports Ranch to detail that information. Ms. Powers began by stating that economic impact studies had indicated a number of benefits with completion of this project to the City. The studies also indicated one major concern that within two years of opening the Sports Ranch, the existing number of hotel rooms in Casper would not be adequate to support the tourism. She elaborated from a business cost standpoint that selling the unimproved land versus investing and creating land that is fully developed and ready for commercial use would be a significant return, and the City would be better served by the latter. Ms. Powers also extended that the economic impact data is available for Council. Vice Mayor Pacheco included his thoughts that he does not believe this will take away from other business downtown or elsewhere and should be looked at as a niche for those coming in for sports in the specific area. Council gave all thumbs up on moving forward.

3. Rec Enterprise Business Plans Part 3- Ice Arena & Recreation Center

Next, City Manager Napier introduced Zulima Lopez, Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities Director, to give an overview of the Recreation Enterprise Business Plans for the Ice Arena and Recreation Center. Ms. Lopez introduced her staff and began with discussion of strategies for the Ice Arena with the main goals of reducing expenses and increasing revenue. Ms. Lopez stated that with the implementation of a few of those ideas since November of 2022, the FY23 cost recovery goal had been met. Next, she discussed the FY24 budget for the Ice Arena and the development of two five-year plans. One detailed expenses and revenue operating one sheet of ice, and a second plan detailed the same if the addition of a second sheet of ice were to be constructed. She further elaborated that the Rec Hockey Leagues, and tournaments would not be a strategy that could be utilized without the addition of the second sheet of ice due to ice time being maxed out. In discussion of revenue she mentioned passing credit card fees to users as well as multiple contracts for user groups that are being finalized. One of these contracts would provide \$20K in revenue from Jr. Hockey Club. Additional changes included the malt beverage permit being utilized as well as extending concession sales, naming rights, additional sponsorships, increased rental rates, and locker room rentals. Ms. Lopez added that staff will recommend user rates be increased

approximately 5% starting in FY25. Next, she gave an overview of the advantage in revenue with construction of the second sheet of ice and expansion of dedicated locker rooms for the hockey clubs. Mr. Pat Bower was in attendance to provide an update on the fundraising efforts for the second sheet of ice. He said formal fund solicitation began about five weeks ago and one to two private donors are being met with a week in order to achieve their goal. Mr. Bower said he is confident in estimating 70% of the \$10M goal will have been met by the end of September. Ms. Lopez ended the Ice Arena discussions with plans to publish the request for proposals for the design administration on the second sheet addition this coming week.

Next, Ms. Lopez presented five-year projections for the Recreation Center and discussed strategies to increase revenue. She began by stating that FY23 ended at 52.4% cost recovery which was above the 50% subsidy goal. This was largely attributed to new advertising endeavors and the push of online sales. Moving forward, subsidy reducing strategies will include the completion of the fitness room with new equipment, specialized programs, and improved marketing. She added staff had obtained a grant from the Department of Family Services to create a space for child care that would allow users to have access to onsite child care services while utilizing the facility. Ms. Lopez elaborated on plans to improve and expand programs and classes and create specialty rentals to make robust offerings to not only individual users but corporate users as well. Lastly, she said staff has looked at possible future capital investment ideas of an additional large multi-purpose gym including locker room renovations and more amenities in FY28. Mayor Knell asked about timeline information on the Aquatic Center construction, completion and reopening dates. Phil Moya, Recreation Manager, stated that construction will begin tomorrow, starting with main supports, then moving to roof, slides and HVAC, with hopes of finishing Phase I and reopening in January.

4. Speed Limit Ordinance Review

Next, City Manager Napier asked Council to consider a possible streamlined and internal approach when it comes to the establishment, alteration, and regulation of speed limits within the City. Staff has suggested drafting proposed language to modify City ordinance thus allowing limits on individual streets to be modified pursuant to Wyoming State Statutes, without the need for formal ordinance change and Council approval in every instance. Keith McPheeters, Police Chief, gave a brief overview of the protocol based on current ordinance language as it pertains to the way speed limit modifications are examined and ultimately changed. He furthered that Council's direction tonight would allow staff to initiate an in-depth study and perform the research needed to determine if it is legally permissible to change the language within the ordinance. This would allow staff to be agile in response and make modifications based on traffic study data and public safety in mind without the need for formal ordinance change on each instance. Mayor Knell asked for Council's input. Council gave all thumbs up to proceed.

5. Agenda Review

Next, City Manager Napier spoke to upcoming meeting items. He said on August 15th Council will hear the 3rd reading of support for the Optional 5th Cent, the preliminary step of establishing a public hearing for ordinance changes; and introduction of a trial Trap Neuter and Return program, as well as the FY24 budget amendment No. 1 being presented in an upcoming regular meeting.

Additional future items included parking garage, camping ordinance, snow removal, and further discussions on additional Recreation Facilities.

6. Legislative Review

Next, City Manager Napier informed he had nothing for the legislative review.

7. 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. Councilor Gamroth expressed concern over the recent announcement of electric rate hikes and said he would like Council to have a discussion as soon as possible to see what if any ability the Council has to contribute and weigh in on the hikes prior to the Public Service Commission's upcoming meeting. Mayor Knell asked to schedule time on an upcoming Work Session Meetings for this issue.

The work session was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Bruce Knell
Mayor