

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

MINUTES

October 8, 2013

The Casper City Council met in work session at 4:30 PM on Tuesday, October 8, 2013. Present: Mayor Schlager, Vice Mayor Meyer, and Councilmembers Bertoglio, Powell, Hedquist, Sandoval, Goodenough, Cathey, and Hopkins. Acting City Manager Linda Witko was also present.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation from Ashley Bright and Pastor Craig Brandon to discuss and provide information about the Mayor's Prayer Luncheon. Pastor Brandon passed around a sheet which has already been sent out. He then explained how many other communities have done similar luncheons and also breakfasts. He stated that they were made aware that the name could cause a problem, but then explained what the purpose of the luncheon would be. He suggested that this would be used to help issues such as poverty resistance, while bringing unity in our community. He said he understood the problem was in the name but not in what they are attempting to do.

Councilman Sandoval suggested that maybe we don't need to change the name, but that we could disperse information saying that all are welcome and to explain that this is not a Christian only event.

Pastor Brandon stated that they do want to include all religions, Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, Jewish, Muslims etc. He explained there is a limit to 350 people, no charge, but all are welcome. He said this would be supported by businesses not just churches.

Councilman Sandoval said he supports this idea, but stressed that this should be a secular event and open to everyone. Councilman Goodenough stated that he did not see the need to have Mayor in the title.

Councilman Powell stated that he wished we had discussed before this went out. He also stated that Council should be sensitive to people who may not like prayer. He would prefer prayer not be in it, but understands the goal.

Councilman Bertoglio said that he believes this is for the community and gave an example of another prayer meeting which included many different churches who all worked together for the good of the community and did not make the meeting about religion.

Council Goodenough again said that he did not see the need to have Mayor in the title.

All council except Councilman Goodenough decided to move forward as it was with the name for this year and then to revisit it later.

Next on the agenda was a presentation of the United Blood Services Award Presentation for Chief King. Chief Chris Walsh stood in to accept the award from United Blood Services, 144 lives were saved from the donation.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation on the Revised DDA Strategic Plan by Brandon Daigle. Mr. Daigle explained to Council that requested changes had been made to the strategic plan, and that they hope that it will now be approved.

Councilman Cathey asked why it still references a conference center and housing.

Mr. Daigle responded that the conference center reference was only with regard to a board room type addition to any hotels placed in downtown. He also stated that housing issues could be generalized more.

Councilman Goodenough stated that he was worried about the City's involvement when it should be privately funded.

Councilman Hedquist stated he understood what Goodenough was suggesting and that he agrees that it could be more generalized. He said that this plan seems very specific.

Mr. Daigle suggested that they could remove the second street restriction.

Councilman Bertoglio stated that they could just generalize the second street area.

Councilman Meyer said he believed that there wasn't anything too specific there and that it is Councils duty to support the Downtown, which is the heart of the community. He explained that he is open to everything that wants to come downtown.

Councilman Hopkins agreed with Councilman Meyer and stated it would be nice to have more retail, housing, grocery, and life downtown. He said even if it isn't ideal for everyone it is something that would help the area.

Councilman Powell stated that he agreed as well and that the DDA has condensed the bigger document into a document that is one-fourth the size and that they did a nice job covering and closing in on what was important. He then stated that we need to increase our housing.

Councilman Cathey stated that we cannot use public funds to shore up the downtown when there was a reason stores left the area. He stated if private business wanted to do this he would support it.

Councilman Sandoval stated that if we have stores downtown we can attract people to live downtown. But we don't have the infrastructure to attract private entities to support this area.

Councilman Hedquist stated his thanks to the DDA for coming down and then asked that maybe they make some changes and then this could move forward.

Mr. Daigle asked whether with the changes noted they could move forward now to expedite the process as it first came to Council in July and now it is October.

Councilman Bertoglio suggested that the plan is nice because at least now there will be direction in the downtown development.

Councilman Hopkins said he met with some developers about adding housing to the downtown and the issue is the amount of land available, but that if you build housing, demand will be there for grocery stores.

The next item on the agenda was the “We Read” Program presentation by Nathan Bekke of the Casper Star Tribune and Steve Hopkins, School District Superintendent. Mr. Bekke said that the way to improve reading skills for children is a community issue not just a school issue. They suggested creating a private and public partnership to aid the program.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the biggest reason students are successful in high school is dependent on third grade reading proficiency. He stated that the way to get them to read at a third grade level is through this program.

Mr. Bekke then explained the parts of this program. The first step is advertising. They are already advertising that people should read with someone special 20 minutes a day. He stated it is everyone’s duty to support and help literacy.

Mr. Hopkins said another important part of this is reading material. Formal instruction in the classroom and then at home to support will garner the best results. He stated that the School District will provide a book to each child every month. These books will then be their books and they will be able to take it home. Also the paper will be sending out a booklet in the paper, “My Trib”, which is available to all residents in town. These are encouraged for everyone to take one.

Mr. Bekke then explained the results thus far from the two surveys they have done.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the power of “We Read” is that it gives children someone else to read with.

Mr. Bekke explained how this program is working so far. He said the Casper Star Tribune, the School District, and the Library are all partnered in this program. He explained how these organizations have formed committees that have helped with this program. He then invited any questions.

Councilman Sandoval asked whether they were taking volunteers to read to children. Mr. Bekke stated that was not part of this program at this time, but that there were other programs that did this.

Councilman Bertoglio asked why there was a dip in success, Mr. Hopkins stated that he expects that it will realign and increase next year. They explained the trend over four years is more important than the unexpected dips and spikes.

Councilman Cathey asked how a test cannot be aligned with the survey. Mr. Hopkins stated that sometimes you can read and not comprehend. And that the survey was flawed due to people saying how much they were reading before they were completely comprehending.

Next on the agenda was Natrona County High School (Update). Dennis Bay from Natrona County School District presented to council the updates that are being made to Natrona County High School. He introduced Marilyn Brockman with Bassetti Architects, Ron Shosh

with Amundsen Associates, Ray Scott from Consilium, and Jason Meyers from WLC Engineering.

Marilyn Brockman presented the diagrams and drawings on the schools additions updates and changes. She then went over the rezoning that has been done and rezones that are still necessary. She also discussed the phases that will occur during the entire process. She stated these phases are important in order to provide a place for students and limit disruptions. She said each of the phases will take about a year. This will also provide the contractors and students separation. Parking will change and students may park on the street.

Councilman Sandoval asked what year the John Walsh Auditorium will be unavailable. Ms. Brockman stated June 2015 to June 2016.

Councilman Bertoglio asked if there would be a traffic light at Spruce Street. Ms. Brockman stated there would be changes but that no light was needed.

Councilman Sandoval asked whether there would be access on Ash Street. Ms. Brockman said that there would be.

Councilman Sandoval asked whether the parking lot will be done expeditiously. She stated it would but it would not be completed until the summer of 2016.

She then informed them that the last phase which includes the gym will only be finished in 2018.

Councilman Hequist asked when they rerouted the street would they be rerouting the utilities. Ms. Brockman said yes they would be rerouting the lines and providing the utilities an easement to access the lines.

Councilman Cathey asked how much drifting snow they expected in the courtyard on the east side. Ms. Brockman stated that they would be heating the sidewalk and that the west side would probably have more snow but that the school district will have to handle snow as they do now by removing it, but they have planned it with snow plow access.

Councilman Hopkins asked whether all the bricks colors will match. Ms. Brockman stated that they are trying to get bricks that are as close as possible.

Ms. Brockman then discussed what the inside of the building would look like. Councilman Powell asked if at some time it was decided that open lunch was a bad idea would this area accommodate the whole building. Ms. Brockman stated it absolutely would.

Councilman Powell asked when the Auditorium will be closed. Ms. B stated summer of 2015 and then opened fall of 2016. Councilman Powell stated that they would have to coordinate with Wyoming Symphony Orchestra.

Finally on the agenda was the Community Promotions FY 2014 – Round 3 Results presentation by Fleur Tremel, Assistant to the City Manager. Mrs. Tremel informed Council what the total amount to be allocated would be. She clarified the amounts in the packets for the

in-kind services and facilities would be half the amount noted due to the fifty percent match. Mrs. Tremel then stated how much money was in the Council Goals line item as of October 3, 2013.

Councilman Bertoglio asked whether the results were divided by 8 or 9, as it appeared Councilman Cathey had not voted. Mrs. Tremel stated they were divided by 9 as Councilman Cathey had in fact voted and those were the numbers he wrote in. Councilman Cathey explained his reasoning for his vote.

Councilman Sandoval asked whether this money came from one cent funds. Mrs. Tremel stated that it did not it came from the Council Goals line item as budgeted. Councilman Cathey explained that this line item was given money in the Budgetary Process. Councilman Sandoval asked what would happen to the money not allocated on Community Promotions in this fund. Mrs. Tremel stated that it would be used in the Spring Round of Community Promotions as well as any other programs Council deems necessary. Council stated they would like to move forward with the results as they were.

Acting Mayor Meyer said they would go around the table for updates and news.

Councilman Powell stated that the City had done a great job with the branch collection.

Councilman Hedquist said that he has some questions on executive session, and whether the Council was using this process correctly. He noted if items were not appropriate for the executive session then he did not feel that he was obligated to keep them from the public.

Councilman Hedquist then asked who decides who can stay in the executive session. Acting City Manager Linda Witko stated that it is typically at the discretion of the City Manager to decide who is necessary to be there in order to answer questions and take minutes.

Councilman Cathey stated he went to CNFR committee meeting and there are some potential issues that could occur due to weather issues and the scheduling of the CNFR. He asked whether there would be some sort of policy as to how to handle things, such as weather, shootings, or any other incidents which may occur. Chief Walsh stated that he was working on similar items with banks and could draft something for such events.

Motion to adjourn into executive session by Bob Hopkins, second by Paul Bertoglio for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations. The vote in favor was unanimous. Council entered into executive session at 6:40 p.m.

Motion to adjourn out of executive session at 7:46pm by Bob Hopkins, second by Councilman Cathey. The vote in favor was unanimous.