

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Tuesday, January 24, 4:30 p.m.

Casper City Hall

Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Casper Housing Authority Loan Request (Kim Summerall-Wright)
2. Sole Source Purchase of Wavetronix Vehicle Detectors (Andrew Beamer)
3. Employee Financial Training (Zulima Lopez)
4. Issues Regarding Smoking In Public Places (Council Discussion)
5. City Manager Report
6. Future Agenda Review
7. Council Around the Table

Vice Mayor Pacheco called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. with the following Councilmembers present: Councilman Morgan, Johnson, Murphy, Huckabay, Powell, Walsh, Hopkins, and Pacheco. Mayor Humphrey was absent.

Vice Mayor Pacheco introduced Kim Summerall-Wright, Executive Director of the Casper Housing Authority, to discuss a new project targeted towards veterans. She began by describing the high need for housing and healthcare services for veterans in Wyoming. The latest proposed C.H.A. project, The Landing, would be a one stop shop that would pull federal and local resources for veterans into one location and would provide permanent supportive housing for homeless veterans. The plan would be to purchase the Roosevelt High School property and have part of the property provide apartments for veterans and lease out other parts of the property for a V.A. Clinic and VET Center that will provide health and mental health services. The 2.5 acre lot would also be utilized for a Farmer's Co-op and Community Garden. A program would also be implemented by current C.H.A. staff that would provide services and resources that help with community reintegration, life skills, and job training.

She then discussed the funding sources for the project and how the C.H.A. has leveraged money given by the City to raise high amounts of funds in the past. She stated that C.H.A. is asking for a low interest loan from the City for the purchase of the property which includes abatement and the contents of the building. The cost of the property is \$436,749.50. Councilman Hopkins asked about how C.H.A. would repay the loan and Ms. Summerall-Wright responded that this would occur through rental income from the onsite agencies. She added that the terms of repayment could be worked out with what the City is comfortable with, but the C.H.A. is interested in a low interest (2%) 15 to 20 year loan. Councilman Walsh asked if the VA has already agreed to this and Ms. Summerall-Wright said that no agreement can be made until the property is purchased, but it has been discussed and they are very interested.

Councilman Hopkins asked where the old Star Tribune building project stands. Ms. Summerall-Wright responded that it is almost completed and will begin leasing out units April 1, 2017. Councilman Morgan asked about the time estimate for the Landing project to be completed if everything falls into place, and Ms. Summerall-Wright responded they estimate 18 months. Councilman Powell asked how the City would fund this, and City Manager McDonald stated that the money could come out of the Perpetual Care Fund. Councilman Hopkins stated that he is hesitant to take tax payer money out of that fund for an investment that will make less money than it is making now. He asked about applications to other funding sources, and Ms. Summerall-Wright stated that most of those are grants and they cannot be completed until a property is purchased; she stated that the City would have first lien on the property. Councilman Huckabay asked about the cost of each homeless person to the City. Ms. Summerall-Wright responded that costs such as those for emergency room visits, mental health issues, C.H.A. services, police time and jail costs all have to be considered. These costs add up to about \$55,000 per person per year.

Vice Mayor Pacheco asked what plan B is if the City does not agree to the loan. Ms. Summerall-Wright stated that because the C.H.A. is a public entity and not a non-profit agency, they cannot go to a bank to get a loan. The City is the only funding source that can provide financing to the C.H.A. Councilman Walsh expressed concern that the C.H.A. would still need another \$2 million to complete the project, and Ms. Summerall-Wright said they will have no problem raising those funds based on past experience. Councilman Powell asked if there have been any formal appraisals done on the property, and Ms. Summerall-Wright stated that there have been two, one appraised the property at \$774,000 and the other at \$776,000. Councilman Walsh asked how this loan would affect the City's budget and City Manager McDonald responded that it should not affect the General Fund's budget because it is coming out of the Perpetual Care Fund. He added that the City will possibly lose higher interest that could be gained over the length of the loan. Council gave Staff direction to move ahead with analyzing the loan terms and the terms of the contract.

Next, Vice Mayor Pacheco introduced Andrew Beamer, Public Services Director, to discuss the sole source purchase of Wavetronix vehicle detectors. Mr. Beamer stated that the City has strived to standardize detectors to utilize radar detection developed by Wavetronix which are technologically more sophisticated than other options and is not hampered by weather conditions. The agreement includes the purchase of sixteen detectors (and ancillary equipment) for five intersections. The project is already budgeted.

Vice Mayor Pacheco introduced Zulima Lopez, Assistant Support Services Director, to highlight an employee financial training program. Ms. Lopez began by explaining that a financial pilot program was offered to employees to improve financial security for employees during this economic downturn. The City purchased SmartDollar which is an employer-based program developed by Dave Ramsey. The purpose was to help educate employees on how to save money. There were 39 interested employees, and 20 were offered the program through a lottery drawing. The program allows employers to track statistics about usage and progress, and the City employees who have used the program have showed a considerable amount of progress in several areas of financial wellness in the last few months since the initiation of the program. Based on these

positive results, staff are exploring options to offer this program to more employees in the future. This will be requested in the proposed budget for next fiscal year.

Vice Mayor Pacheco asked Councilman Walsh to begin the discussion regarding the smoking ban. Councilman Walsh began by explaining that he thought this issue was worth revisiting after speaking with a local bar owner about the negative impact the ban has had on his business. He stated that the ban has pushed business to bars in Mills and Evansville and said he does not believe the government should be legislating health behaviors. Councilman Murphy and Johnson concurred with Councilman Walsh and stated that voters do not have the right to make this decision, because they do not own these businesses.

Councilman Huckabay stated that she was part of the smoke-free campaign but that she is open-minded to all perspectives. She pointed out that the five Councilmen that were on Council during the referendum vote who still hold Council seats all voted in favor of letting citizens vote in a special election on this issue. She stated that the public was given the opportunity to vote, whether they came out or not. She added that in this economic state, Council should not waste money on unnecessary expenses, and the City would have to spend a considerable amount of money and resources if this issue was reopened. Councilman Powell stated that these are all the same arguments that have been stated before. He explained that the smoke-free campaigners were asked years ago to collect data supporting their claims, and they did a very well done survey that showed strong support from the community to become smoke-free. He stated that there were six polling places for the referendum vote and they were all very full, so in his opinion there was a good turnout. The vote was close, but the result was that the majority of people wanted a smoke-free community. Revisiting this issue and overturning the referendum vote result would have great consequence and lead to mistrust in the government and to citizens feeling like they are not being heard. He added that allowing smoking also makes it more difficult to attract younger people to this community and could hurt the City economically because businesses want to go to communities that attract millennials. Vice Mayor Pacheco stated that overturning the vote would send the message that Council does not think that citizens' opinions matter and this panel of nine people should not override the majority opinion of thousands of voters.

Councilman Johnson stated that Council could decide to just repeal the referendum vote and go back to the compromised amended ordinance; this would not cost the City any money. Councilman Huckabay stated that if Council repeals the vote, there will be a petition again and there will have to be another special election and referendum vote. A petition is already being prepared in case this occurs, so it would cost the City money. Councilman Morgan stated that the reason for the ban was to improve public health, but Casper still has a high incidence of health problems. He stated that there has been a suitable time span to see if the ban has improved health, and it has not. He asked if there would be a way to encourage the County to take up this issue, so that Casper bars are not so adversely affected. Councilman Walsh stated that they have an economic incentive to not implement a smoking ban, so he does not think they would want to get involved.

Councilman Murphy stated that the wording on the ballot was very confusing and that because the special election was held separately from a general election, there was a low turnout. City Attorney Luben explained that the referendum vote does have to go to special election unless it is in close

enough proximity to a general election. In the case of this referendum vote, the timing required that it go to a special election. Councilman Murphy asked if it does go to a special election again if there is a way to make the wording clearer. City Attorney Luben responded that he and City Manager McDonald drafted the ballot language and that he does not believe there is a way to make it clearer. It was difficult to draft language due to the complexity of the original ordinance and amended ordinance. Staff tried their best to educate the public about what their vote meant, but voters are ultimately responsible for being informed and asking questions if they do not understand. He added that Council approved the ballot and the language before it went to the referendum vote.

Councilman Morgan asked if Council should table this discussion until a general election year. Council discussed that the decision should be made now, and that it could be brought up in the future during a general election year if need be. Council did a thumbs up vote to decide whether or not to move forward with revisiting the smoking ban issue and changing the ordinance, and four Councilmembers were in favor of moving forward and four were against moving forward. Council decided to call Mayor Humphrey in order to break the tie. Mayor Humphrey stated, via phone, that she believes Council needs to honor the results of the referendum vote, therefore she gave a thumbs down to moving forward with revisiting this issue. Therefore, Council decided against moving forward with revisiting issues related to the smoking ordinance.

Next, City Manager McDonald gave the City Manager Report. He began by reviewing the financial reports and year to date revenue. He stated that it is close to projected. The Department of Revenue has not notified the City as to why there was a drop off in revenue over the last couple of months. Department heads are working hard to stay at or under budget with expenses and on coming up with ways to reduce costs. The Events Center is currently showing at a loss, but will be coming up on its high income season so these numbers should change. He then reviewed some of the capital revenue funds. Councilman Huckabay asked about the process for non-profit requests, and Assistant City Manager Liz Becher explained that these requests are made annually at the beginning of the fiscal year. City Manager McDonald stated that there have been some unanticipated requests to the health insurance fund, which may result in an increase in insurance premiums next year. He then reviewed the snow removal fund, stating that overtime for snow removal comes out of this fund. The City has used about half of what was budgeted in the snow removal fund so far this year. Council will receive a snow removal report in July that details these costs. There will be a Community Development coffee talk on February 9 to meet the new inspector and get a rundown of all of the projects the City is currently working on.

City Manager McDonald then reviewed the Glide Path Report and summarized its purpose for the new Councilmembers. He stated that it is important to prepare for the loss of above the cap funding from the State, and staff has been working on modifying the budget to ease that transition. These issues will be discussed in more detail on February 14 during the pre-budget discussion. Councilman Powell asked at what point the City's reserves will be less than the policy recommendations, and City Manager McDonald responded that this will likely occur next year.

City Manager McDonald then reminded Council that Council Orientation will be held next Tuesday, January 31, 2017. Councilman Murphy stated that he is unable to attend on that date.

Council discussed further delaying the orientation so that all Councilmembers are in attendance. City Attorney Luben emphasized that it is important for all Councilmembers to attend the orientation so that they are sufficiently trained and understand legalities related to their position. Councilman Huckabay stated that this training is important so that Councilmembers understand their responsibilities and she does not feel comfortable with delaying it any further. City Manager McDonald stated that Mark Stewart from W.A.R.M. is already scheduled to travel from Cheyenne to present at the training. Council decided that they will not reschedule the training and Councilman Murphy will meet separately with City Attorney Luben and City Manager McDonald to review the important points.

Next, Council went around the table to discuss their respective board and committee meetings. Councilman Powell discussed property tax issues that were brought to him by a citizen. Council asked that this issue be added to a work session agenda. Vice Mayor Pacheco stated that Mayor Humphrey is working on board and committee appointments. Council asked that leadership lunch attendance for the extra two Councilmembers at each of those meetings be put on a scheduled rotation as opposed to trying to work around several different schedules. Vice Mayor Pacheco stated that the Memorandum of Understanding with the Parkway Plaza has expired. They did not follow through with their obligations under Phase 1, so the City is parting ways with that agreement. He stated that they still plan to move forward with the conference center, but the City will no longer be involved. Councilman Powell suggested a future discussion about the back-up private investment plan for a conference center. City Manager McDonald stated that there was a bill introduced at the state level that would allow liquor licenses auctions. Councilman Powell stated that the Wyoming Association of Municipalities testified in opposition to the bill, because it would take away the cities' influence on the process and it still does not solve the problem of having enough licenses.

Vice Mayor Pacheco adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Tracey L. Belser
City Clerk

Kenyne Humphrey
Mayor