

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Tuesday, February 23, 2016, 4:30 p.m.
Casper City Hall
Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Charter Update (Erik Rasmussen, Clint Rodeman)
2. Big Brothers Big Sisters Program (Scott Grahl, Amanda Robbins-Lilley)
3. Budget Review
4. City Manager Report
5. Future Agenda Review
6. Council Around the Table
7. Executive Session – Litigation

Mayor Sandoval called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmen Cathey, Johnson, Heili, Pacheco, Schlager, Miller, Powell, and Sandoval. Councilman Hopkins was absent.

Mayor Sandoval introduced Erik Rasmussen and Clint Rodeman from Charter Communications to update Council on issues with Charter's service within Casper. Mr. Rodeman gave a brief summary of some of the problems residents have been having with outages. He stated that these issues were resolved and that Charter has not experienced any further issues since December. Councilman Heili asked for an update on Charter's franchise agreement with the City. Mr. Rasmussen stated that they have been in communication with Staff about the agreement and some possible upgrades. They are planning on meeting with City Manager McDonald at the beginning of March.

Councilman Powell asked if Charter tracks the number of customers that have problems and if the number of Casper customers who experience issues is within normal range. Mr. Rasmussen explained that the calls are tracked when service is down in certain areas, so they are able to compile that data. Mr. Rodeman stated that Casper has an average number of outages when compared with other areas. Councilman Schlager asked if the aging infrastructure has been causing some of the problems for residents and if the infrastructure is maintained. Mr. Rodeman replied that the updates and maintenance to infrastructure are ongoing.

Councilman Powell asked about issues related to the televised Council meetings, noting that he has received complaints that the cameras are not on the people who are speaking. Deputy Assistant City Manager Fleur Tremel explained that one camera pointed at the lectern is functional, but that the cameras that are pointed at Council have had issues. The camera is not expanding to show all of the Councilmembers. Michael Szewczyk, IT Manager, stated that the City received a quote from Nordic Sound recommending that the four current cameras be replaced with three cameras. They also recommended replacing the controller equipment box. Mayor Sandoval asked how our equipment became so outdated without replacements and updates from Charter. Mr. Rasmussen

responded that the agreements have been in place for a very long time, and those updates may not have been in the original franchise agreement. He added that the equipment belongs to the City, so the City is responsible for upgrading it.

Mr. Szewczyk stated that there is a Charter employee behind the scenes at the Council meetings who reports problems to the City's IT staff. Mr. Rasmussen explained that the new agreement will not provide Charter staff to man the cameras. Mr. Szewczyk stated that City IT Staff will get up to speed and have been training on the system during Council meetings. City Manager McDonald added that this will not be an additional cost to the City, because an IT employee is already at the Council meetings. Councilman Cathey asked if there are performance criteria in the agreement that will hold Charter to a certain standard of service. Mr. Rasmussen replied that there are standards set by the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) that Charter is required to follow.

Councilman Powell asked how often the City renews the franchise agreement. Ms. Tremel responded that it is renewed every five to seven years, and the City is currently working under an extended contract because the original contract has expired. Mr. Rasmussen stated that Charter would like the next contract agreement to be a ten year term with a five year auto-renewal. He added that Charter will be making a \$75,000 investment so the longer contract will provide sureties that their investment in the community is warranted. Councilman Schlager asked if the new agreement can first come to a work session so that Council has a chance to look over it and make recommendations. City Manager McDonald replied that it will come to a work session before it is voted on in a Regular Council Meeting.

Next, Mayor Sandoval introduced Amanda Robbins-Lilley, Branch Manager of Greater Wyoming Big Brother Big Sisters. Ms. Robbins-Lilley explained the vision, mission and purpose of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS). She explained what each of their programs are which include community-based, site-based, and progressive youth programs, and the positive impact that each has on youth in the community.

She asked for help from Council to either volunteer to be mentors or to help recruit mentors. She also asked to meet with Council one-on-one to help her and the organization think of ways to mobilize the community. She added that donations always help. Councilman Powell asked how BBBS is funded. Ms. Robbins-Lilley responded that they are funded through grants, donations, and government funding including City, County, and State funding. Councilman Heili asked if BBBS is a United Way recipient. Ms. Robbins-Lilley explained that currently the local branch does not receive money from United Way, because it is not large enough. She would like to receive that type of funding in the future as the program grows.

Councilman Heili asked what the current needs are for mentors. Ms. Robbins-Lilley responded that there are more children that need to be matched than volunteers available. They are always in need of more male volunteers, because there are usually more females that volunteer but more male children that need to be matched. Councilman Pacheco stated that statistically there are many benefits to mentoring and being involved with youth is very beneficial to the community. Councilman Miller asked what the organization is struggling with most. Ms. Robbins-Lilley

responded that they need more volunteers. The local organization is currently in a rebuilding phase, and she would like to grow Casper's branch so they are able to apply for bigger grants.

Mayor Sandoval asked if the program is successful in helping children long term. Ms. Robbins-Lilley responded that there are several studies that show the long term positive impact of BBBS on children and their communities. She also explained the concept of restorative justice and how she would like to start implementing that as part of their progressive youth programs in this community.

Next, Mayor Sandoval asked City Manager McDonald to update Council on the budget. City Manager McDonald began by summarizing the current state of the budget. The shortfall is at \$4.25M through February 2016. The projected shortfall for Fiscal Year 2016 is now \$6M. Retail sales are staying fairly constant, but the City is losing money in other areas, including seasonal revenues. The unemployment rate has increased from 4% to 5.5% in Natrona County. The City has used up \$721,000 in reserves so far.

Mayor Sandoval asked how the City projects the deficit. City Manager McDonald explained how the City uses an extensive database of spending trends that allow for projections in spending each month. Councilman Powell asked if water and mowing for parks will be decreased to help cut costs. City Manager McDonald responded that the City is approaching a level where service changes may need to be contemplated, but as of now the City is maintaining services without increasing overtime.

He explained some of the other ways the City is saving money including attrition. He stated that Department Heads are reviewing ways to save money without losing efficiency. Council has given the City permission to use reserves. Councilman Powell asked how the City will budget if the revenue stays at this low level. City Manager McDonald stated that the City will have to rely on above the cap funding for operations costs, but this is not a long term solution because this funding is not guaranteed after two years. The City will use those funds for the next two years, and Staff is working on a long term plan for funding after those two years. The City did gain some money last year in reserves, which provides a small cushion.

Councilman Heili asked about the 1% funding and if the City will need to start cutting projects. City Manager McDonald stated that the City may start having to review projects. He added that Council will need to make these decisions and may need to decide if organizations that were promised money will still receive that money.

Next, City Manager McDonald updated Council on the Urban Forestry program. The program was a pilot program for \$450,000 and there is \$62,000 leftover. The Public Service Director cut the program in 2009 because it was not fulfilling expectations. The leftover \$62,000 may be able to be used for the dead tree issue. Staff has been in contact with federal organizations about other options for funding for the tree issue. The City has not applied for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) funds yet, but will be looking into this. City Manager McDonald met today with the staff leading the task force to come up with some ideas of how to deal with this issue. So far, the City has taken care of about 50% of trees, and it appears that there has been progress in

cutting down the dead trees on private land as well. The task force is attempting to identify a standard for which trees and what size of trees pose a safety risk.

Liz Becher, Community Development Director, notified Council that Chili's Restaurant is coming to Casper and will be built in the Mesa area. They will be using a restaurant liquor license as opposed to a bar grill liquor license.

City Manager McDonald reviewed the agenda for the Regular Council Meeting on March 1, 2016. Councilman Cathey explained an item on the agenda related to contractor licensing. Mayor Sandoval stated he will be responding to an article in the Star Tribune, and he will send the response out to Council for approval when he has completed it.

Next, Councilmembers reported updates for each of their respective board meetings.

Council adjourned into executive session to discuss litigation at 6:49 p.m., moved by Councilman Johnson and seconded by Councilman Cathey. Motion passed.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Tracey L. Belser
City Clerk

Daniel Sandoval
Mayor