

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.
City Hall - Council Chambers

AGENDA

1. Council Meeting Follow-up
2. Engineering Consultants
3. Athletic Field Operation Agreement
4. Two-Way to One Way Proposal St. Anthony Proposal
5. Agenda Review
6. Legislative Review
7. Council Around the Table

1. Council Meeting Follow-up

There were no items for Council follow-up.

2. Engineering Consultants

City Manager Napier began the topic explaining that the question was what is the general level of engineer services we want to procure from outside consultants. He explained which types we outsourced. He stated we do spend a lot on these, but we don't have the expertise and staff to do this. He did ask for more information and background to be presented. So that is the balancing question for Council to decide how to internal vs. external services. He then turned the time over to Alex Sveda, City Engineer. Mr. Sveda stated that we do have a lot of consultants. Over the last two years we have had larger projects like the Derington water, 1st street, upwards of several million dollars. We have had six of those over the last two years and we've paid of 7-800,000 thousand dollars. We do a lot of projects smaller in house. But the bigger projects take different type of expertise. Councilmember Knell asked why are we so light in the engineer department? Councilmember Knell asked if restoring Engineering staff to earlier levels would "balance out" the costs currently spent on outside engineering firms by reducing the cost of outsourcing despite the higher cost of in-house staff.

Mr. Sveda replied that the City Engineering Division used to employ fourteen people; it currently employs seven. But in regards to the specific question of whether there could be cost savings by hiring more engineers, he said that he was very uncertain. He said that some outsourcing would always be necessary, especially for large projects. He also said that some specialty tasks should also be outsourced. Surveying services, for example, are outsourced to a private firm, and Mr. Sveda suggested that the need for this service was inconsistent, so the cost to hire a surveyor probably wouldn't be recouped by bringing that position back in house.

Councilmember Gamroth noted the reduction in staff, and he asked what impacts that has had generally with the operation of the Division. Mr. Sveda said that it has certainly caused the Division to outsource more work, but he added that he didn't feel like it has had any particular impact on the quality of the engineering work, one way or the other. He specifically mentioned the Derington Waterline project, which is a multimillion-dollar waterline replacement project.

Derington was designed in-house with city engineers, but construction management will be outsourced because it will require constant oversight of the contractor, and the Division simply doesn't have the manpower to provide that level of surveillance.

Mr. Napier asked Mr. Sveda if he could provide a breakdown of how much is spent annually on outside engineering services. Mr. Sveda said that in the last two years, it's been about \$800,000 of civil engineering work and \$3 million of engineering work overall.

Mr. Napier suggested that City staff could propose to budget for another civil engineering position for the upcoming budget year, but he suggested that adding new positions to cover the entirety of the \$800,000 of outsourced civil engineering work would probably not be realistic or cost effective.

Councilmember Cathey asked if the Council could be provided with a breakdown of costs by engineering specialty – separate amounts spent on electrical engineering, for example, as opposed to civil, mechanical, environmental, and so on. He suggested that this would help to guide how many engineers might be reasonably hired by the City, and in which disciplines.

3. Athletic Field Operation Agreement

Mr. Napier said that this item was a follow up from a previous discussion. Athletic fields, especially baseball and softball fields, have often been leased to the local baseball organizations. There has been particular interest in the management of Mike Lansing Field, which is unique for its professional concession areas and bleachers. Mr. Napier explained that tonight's discussion would go over a management proposal from the Parks and Recreation Division.

Zulima Lopez, the Parks and Recreation Department Director, recounted that she had been having meetings with the local baseball organizations. Some of them suggested that a long term lease would be valuable because private donors are often more willing to give to capital projects at those facilities when they know that the recipient group will continue to benefit from that donation for a long period of time.

Ms. Lopez suggested that while it was being leased, the City had been subsidizing Mike Lansing Field to the tune of 98%. The city has since been managing Mike Lansing directly, and in that time, the field has been approaching a breakeven point. She made it clear that the goal of the city was to continue with this level of financial performance. User group conflicts had also been an issue because previous lessees would sometimes be reticent to share field time with rival groups. In summary, she suggested that a lease of five to ten years might be a good solution, especially if there were provisions for field sharing.

Councilmember Knell asked what Ms. Lopez would recommend.

Councilmember Pollock asked about the pros and cons of leasing versus not leasing. Ms. Lopez suggested that all of the challenges were the cons, but she also said that it was Staff's opinion that all of those challenges could be overcome. Regarding keeping the management in house, she said that the major plausible con was that donors might be reticent to helping out with improvements to the fields. But on the other hand, staying directly involved allows the city to handle problems and day to day scheduling. She pointed out that even when the fields are

leased, the City is always held responsible in the public's eye for any problems, and in those situations, the lessee is responsible, but the city gets blamed.

Councilmember Johnson joined the meeting at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Lopez said that her recommendation would be to further explore a field leasing agreement, probably with multiple user groups simultaneously, with the following caveats:

- The rate structure would assure adequate cost recapture.
- The lease would require maintenance from each lessee, with regular review of the site and mutual inspections.
- The lessee would be required to assure a set of capital improvements to the fields.
- The lessee would have to ensure insurance compliance.
- A solution would be needed for the management of concessions. She said that the city has no desire to oversee concessions, but handling that issue can be legally tricky because of alcohol licensure requirements. Ideally, she said that the City could hire a concessionaire who could handle that operation regardless of who was playing on the field.
- Collaborative scheduling would be required. Rules would have to be in place to require field sharing, and that would include allowing the City to host its own events on any leased fields.
- The agreement would include consequences for noncompliance, to include fines or fees for mismanagement, and an option to terminate the lease under certain circumstances.

Councilmember Gamroth asked if signs could be posted on the leased fields to make it clear that the lessee was responsible for the management of the fields. He added that he was pleased by the interest from Spectra to host its own events at the fields, and he asked if Spectra might be interested in taking over the concessions at Mike Lansing, much like it has at Hogadon.

Mr. Napier asked if Ms. Lopez could clarify how multiple baseball organizations could share the responsibility for maintaining the fields. Ms. Lopez said that this was really two problems: cleaning and maintenance of the bleachers and the building, and maintenance of the playing field itself.

Ms. Lopez said that City staff's proposal would be for Parks staff to continue being responsible for field maintenance on a day to day basis, though this could be shared somewhat with lessees for unusual circumstances such as double headers. Regarding cleaning and building maintenance, she suggested that this could be solved by requiring inspection before and after any user event.

Councilmember Knell said that, in his opinion, there should be no sign to indicate who was the lessee, because he'd like to continue to have the City get the calls when people have complaints. Regarding the proposal from City staff, he asked if it involved leasing to just one of the groups, or to several of them jointly.

Ms. Lopez said that the Horseheads had specifically offered to take over the concessions, and she said that she was interested in exploring that. She said that she would be opposed to a primary lease with subletting agreements to other groups, partly because those agreements have led to conflicts in the past, and partly because it complicated insurance and liability matters.

Councilmember Knell complimented Ms. Lopez on her efforts and on her track record of reducing the subsidy expenses. He also suggested that some sort of board or committee of user groups could be formed to help manage the fields.

Councilmember Cathey asked how long such a lease might last. Ms. Lopez said that the user groups asked for an agreement of five years or more, and Ms. Lopez said that she would be looking for something at ten years or less.

Councilmember Pollock asked how City staff would monitor the performance of each user group. Ms. Lopez said that she would like to establish minimum standards and quality control, especially on such matters as cleanliness. She mentioned that this is already done, as a matter of course, at the North Casper Clubhouse – it is inspected every time at the end of a reservation, just to make sure that the group has adequately fulfilled its obligations.

Councilmember Gamroth suggested that a group email or complaint form could be built so that any complaints would be sent to the City and to all of the relevant groups simultaneously.

The Council offered its support for pursuing a multi-party agreement to manage these fields, presumably with a time frame of five to ten years in length.

4. Two Way to One Way Conversion in the vicinity of St. Anthony's School (HY Avenue, 20th Street, etc.)

Mr. Napier said that City staff have been looking into the traffic problems in the vicinity of 20th and HY, and staff has been considering whether a change from two-way streets to a one-way street might solve those congestion problems.

Mr. Sveda said that 248 vehicles per day were going through that intersection, which generally indicates low traffic flow. Accident reports came up with only three traffic accidents, and none of them were severe. All told, he said that neither the traffic nor the accidents were indicative of any need to convert from a two-way street to a one-way street.

Councilmember Cathey asked if traffic was greatly affected by the Safeway moving out of that building. Mr. Sveda said that he did not think that it was. Mayor Pacheco noted that he had once been the dean at St. Anthony's, and at the time, he had not experienced any trouble with the traffic or interactions with the store.

Councilmember Knell expressed his appreciation for the work done by Mr. Sveda and his staff.

5. Upcoming Agenda Items

Mr. Napier said that on February 1st there would be a discussion of court issues and a discussion of the updated ward boundaries. Mayor Pacheco noted that he had asked for an earlier meeting time for the conversation with the Court, hence the premeeting beginning at 5:15 PM.

Mr. Napier said that the meeting on March 8th would be extensive. Topics included a discussion of the community promotions, council committee assignments, and capital budgeting.

Councilmember Cathey asked about the upcoming topic of parking cars on front lawns, and he suggested that it should be addressed sooner rather than later. Mr. Napier noted the packed agendas in February and March, but he quickly added that he and the rest of City staff would be eager to adapt to Council's wishes in regards to scheduling.

Mr. Napier also noted some upcoming executive session items, including litigation matters and land acquisition.

6. Legislative Agenda

Mr. Napier said that Council would be meeting with state legislators on February 3rd. This would serve as an opportunity to share Council's insights on upcoming pieces of legislation. He specifically noted that the pharmacy fee legislation, if passed, would add roughly \$7 million per year to the State of Wyoming's public employee health plan. Casper is a member of that plan, so the City would share in some of that increased burden if it should pass.

7. Around the Table

Councilmember Engebretsen said that the Senior Center parking lot needs maintenance, as is CY Avenue. Councilmember Gamroth agreed that CY is in terrible shape, but he also noted that it is a WYDOT managed highway.

Councilmember Knell said that despite all the queries from the public, he was unable to provide any information on the recent incident with the off-duty police officer; his only comment was that the officer was off duty at the time.

Councilmember Sutherland mentioned the recent ideas about contractors licensing. She said that the goal of these proposals was to ensure that a fair process exists for the review and appeal of any complaints or citations.

Vice Mayor Freel complimented all of the UW alumni who were now playing professional football, including players on three of the teams who had played this past weekend.

8. Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 PM.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Ray Pacheco
Mayor