

COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Tuesday, April 12, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.
City Hall – Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Council Meeting Follow-up
2. Clerk of Court Introduction
3. 311 Council Training
4. Project S.A.F.E.
5. Police Response to Alarms
6. Hotels/Lodging Ordinance Changes
7. Agenda Review
8. Legislative Review
9. Council Around the Table

Mayor Pacheco called the work session to order at 4:30 p.m. with the following Councilmembers present: Pollock, Gamroth, Engebretsen, Vice Mayor Freel, and Mayor Pacheco. Councilmember Knell attended the meeting virtually via GoToMeeting. Councilmember Johnson arrived to the meeting at 4:57 p.m. Councilmembers Sutherland and Cathey were absent.

1. Council Meeting Follow-up

There were no items for Council follow-up.

2. Clerk of Court Introduction

City Manager Napier introduced Council to the new Clerk of Municipal Court, Leticia Drake. Council welcomed her to the City staff team.

3. 311 Council Training

Next, City Manager Napier gave a brief overview of the 311 app and introduced Michael Szewczyk, IT Manager, to train Council on how to use the app. Mr. Szewczyk began by reviewing the ten different request types in the app, including code enforcement requests, streets/traffic requests, and damaged/missing container requests. He explained that the requests can be submitted with an account or anonymously, and most of them automatically populate the City's work order systems. He then did a demonstration of the app for Council and stated that the 311 app will soon be incorporated into a Connect Casper app. City Manager Napier encouraged Council to promote the app to help services be completed faster.

4. Project S.A.F.E.

Next, City Manager Napier discussed bids for Project S.A.F.E. He stated that very little work has been done to refurbish City Hall since it was built in 1978, and many pieces of the building are deteriorating. \$2.5M was originally set aside for the Project S.A.F.E. remodel, but recently, five bids were received in response to the request for proposals, and all five were around \$6M. He then reviewed Council's options which included rejecting all of the bids, revaluing engineering the project, or accepting the lowest bid and trying to locate other funding to make up the difference in cost. He stated that the second option is probably not feasible as staff has already looked into this

option and found that the City would still be short about \$3M. He stated that staff is recommending that Council reject all of the bids, reevaluate the scope of the project, and come back at a later date with more options for Council to consider. Councilmember Engebretsen asked about phasing the project, and City Manager Napier stated that this would be difficult to do, because the HVAC and fire suppression systems would need to be part of the first phase of the project which is a very invasive process. Council discussed concerns about the costs of construction continuing to increase. Council supported the recommendation to move forward with formally rejecting all of the bids in at a future Council meeting.

5. Police Response to Alarms

Next, City Manager Napier discussed a follow up item on the Police Department's response to alarms. He introduced Police Chief McPheeters to give an overview of this response and possible adjustments to the ordinance governing alarm response. Chief McPheeters stated that changes to the ordinance would be focused on increasing operational efficiencies by reducing liability from not responding to an alarm, separating hold up alarms from private intrusion alarms, and mitigating false alarms. He reviewed the statistics for false alarms and explained the amount of police time spent in responding to these false alarms. He recommended removing a provision in the ordinance that allows for the Chief of Police to stop responding to a location that trips a lot of false alarms, explaining that not responding to alarms could open the City up to liability. He also recommended a fee structure that would increase with the number of false alarms a facility trips and charge a fee for those false alarm police responses. These fees are meant to incentivize the facility to fix the cause of the false alarms. Vice Mayor Freel discussed instances where it may seem unfair to charge a facility for a false alarm that is out of their control, such as an electrical storm. Chief McPheeters explained that officers would have discretion in such instances. He also explained that there is an appeal process in the ordinance. Council gave their thumbs up to move forward with amending the ordinance with staff's recommendations and to move forward with a resolution to assess fees for false alarms.

6. Hotels/Lodging Ordinance Changes

Next, City Attorney Henley discussed the hotels & lodging ordinance. He stated that this was brought up at a recent work session and during that discussion the issue of vacation rentals, such as Airbnb, came up. He discussed the research his office had done into different regulations including safety regulations. Vice Mayor Freel stated that other longer-term rentals do not have these same regulations imposed on them. City Attorney Henley then discussed lodging tax, which is supposed to be imposed on rentals shorter than thirty days. The tax is collected on some vacation rental sites but not all of them. In the case that it is not collected, it would be self-reported and collected by the vacation rental owner. Councilmember Pollock asked for the sales and lodging tax requirement to be added to the ordinance. Vice Mayor Freel responded that this is already in state statute and adding this to the ordinance would be redundant and would require a lot of work for staff to regulate. City Attorney Henley stated that this would actually be the responsibility of the Department of Revenue to regulate. Councilmember Gamroth and Johnson stated that other communities have expressed issues involving vacation rentals but expressed caution in overregulating if there are no current issues in Casper. City Manager Napier stated that if there was concern, the City could let the Department of Revenue know they would launch an

investigation into the tax issue. Council directed staff that they do not want to impose safety regulations on vacation rentals because they are not currently imposed on other longer-term rentals. City Attorney Henley reviewed the previously addressed ordinance amendment language. Council gave their thumbs up to move forward with the previously addressed ordinance amendment language.

7. Agenda Review

Next, Council reviewed upcoming Council meeting and work session agendas. Vice Mayor Freel asked about adding a follow-up for a discussion on the unsafe structure ordinance, and Council gave their thumbs up to add this to a future work session agenda.

8. Legislative Review

Next, City Manager Napier reviewed recent state legislative items that are pertinent to the City of Casper, including committee assignments for legislation related to enhanced penalties for vulnerable persons, liquor licenses, and enhanced municipal authority. He stated that missing persons legislation has not been assigned to a committee but does have a good sponsor to back the legislation. He added that the Wyoming Association of Municipalities resolutions deadline is approaching, and staff will be asking Council for guidance on a few items including water funding, pharmacy benefits, and the American Rescue Plan Act.

9. Around the Table

Next, Council went around the table to discuss their respective board and committee meetings as well as matters of public interest. Councilmember Johnson requested information on life jacket requirements on the North Platte River, and Council agreed to add this as a future agenda item. Councilmember Pollock asked about information related to the City facility study, and City Manager Napier responded that staff expects to have the report back by the end of May and will be presenting the information to Council in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING
A Municipal Corporation

Fleur Tremel
City Clerk

Ray Pacheco
Mayor