

September 8, 2020 Work Session

The City Council of the City of Idaho Falls met in Council Work Session, Tuesday, September 8, 2020, in the Council Chambers in the City Annex Building located at 680 Park Avenue in Idaho Falls, Idaho at 3:00 p.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

There were present:

Mayor Rebecca L. Noah Casper
Councilmember Michelle Ziel-Dingman
Councilmember John Radford (via WebEx)
Councilmember Thomas Hally
Councilmember Jim Freeman (via WebEx)
Councilmember Jim Francis
Councilmember Shelly Smede

Also present:

PJ Holm, Parks and Recreation Director
Ronnie Campbell, Parks Division Superintendent
Chris Horsley, Recreation Division Superintendent
David Pennock, Idaho Falls Zoo Superintendent
Pamela Alexander, Municipal Services Director
Josh Roos, Treasurer
Duane Nelson, Fire Chief (via WebEx)
Bryce Johnson, Police Chief
Bill Squires, Police Captain
Randy Fife, City Attorney
Kathy Hampton, City Clerk

Mayor Casper called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. with the following items:

Acceptance and/or Receipt of Minutes:

It was moved by Councilor Francis, seconded by Council President Dingman, to receive the recommendations from the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting of September 1, 2020 pursuant to the Local Land Use Planning Act (LLUPA). Roll call as follows: Aye – Councilors Hally, Radford, Francis, Dingman, Smede, Freeman. Nay – none. Motion carried.

Calendars, Announcements and Reports

September 10-12 and 17-19, Parade of Homes
September 10, Photo Op with Evalyn McGaha (Ms. McGaha was recently honored at the White House, she will also be honored at the September 10 City Council Meeting)
September 12, Idaho Falls Symphony Live Backyard Broadcast
September 16, Citizen's Police Academy begins
September 16, Chamber of Commerce Business Lunch with Governor Brad Little
September 17, Constitution Day
September 18, Community Suicide Prevention (CSP) Annual Suicide Prevention Conference
September 24, Idaho Falls Power (IFP) Board Meeting and City Council Meeting
October 8, Regional Economic Development Inc. (REDI) Virtual Annual Summit and City Council Meeting
October 24, Airport leadership Workshop

Mayor Casper stated she attended the open house for Community Youth in Action (CYA) on September 5 – she noted there have been several updates to the City-owned (Boy Scouts of America) facility. She also stated open enrollment is occurring for any changes to the employee benefit package.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update:

September 8, 2020 Work Session

Mayor Casper stated the number of reported cases has decreased. The Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) Board was complimented by the area hospitals as they believe the decrease is due to the current EIPH orders. Mayor Casper noted the recent back to school and the previous Labor Day holiday weekend may have an impact to the COVID rates in the near future.

Liaison Reports and Council Concerns:

Council President Dingman reiterated the CYA open house. She believes CYA provides an invaluable service to the community including school supplies, a food pantry, clothing, tutoring, and life-skill classes. She also believes the facility space is well-built for this purpose.

Councilor Francis noted Chief Johnson has spent several hours with the Connecting Us – Sustaining Progress (CUSP) committee.

Councilor Hally stated personnel from the Idaho Falls Fire Department (IFFD) are still/currently deployed for wildland fires. He also stated a Homeland grant in the amount of \$36,000 would upgrade the Global Positioning System (GPS) that automatically turns street lights to green for the sirens. The remaining grant funds would retrofit the attachment of air bottles.

Councilor Smede stated, referencing COVID, students are not liking masks very well. Mayor Casper noted per Councilor Smede, individuals can take a mask break, and individuals can set their own boundaries but they should not try to set others' boundaries.

Councilor Freeman gave a shout-out to IFP, the IFFD, the Idaho Falls Police Department (IFPD), and the Street Division for their assistance with the recent storm/wind issues. He noted Pinecrest Golf Course lost several trees during this storm. He also stated IFPD is continuing to review and update their Use of Force policies. Mayor Casper noted the dialogue with IFPD is an ongoing effort and the IFPD is continuing to work on several items, including outreach.

Councilor Radford had no items to report.

General Parks and Recreation (P&R) Summer Activities Update:

Director Holm expressed his appreciation to the P&R staff for their hard work cleaning up trees and debris following the recent wind/storm. He displayed several pictures from the recent storm.

Director Holm reviewed the Parks Operation and Maintenance effects of COVID-19 including budget cuts, staff reductions, and priorities for Sandy Downs, Parks Maintenance, Weed Control, Noise Park, and Horticulture. He displayed several pictures of overgrown weeds in shrub beds and playgrounds, overgrown grass in turf areas, weeds on sidewalks and right-of-ways, irrigation issues, cemeteries, and increased cleaning and disinfecting. Director Holm noted the death of a City employee in the Parks Division earlier in the year. He stated all Rec staff were needed to help with Parks staff in the cemeteries prior to Memorial Day – he expressed his appreciation to the Rec staff. Director Holm also displayed several pictures of completed projects including the Lincoln Park water line and restroom, removal of the fence at Elk Pasture, removal of old and outdated playgrounds at Central Park and Rollandet Park (these playgrounds are top priority for replacement), removal of the old storage building at Funland, road improvements at Fielding Cemetery and North Park Road in Tautphaus Park, installation of new playgrounds at The Dunes Park and Community Park, installation of two (2) ping pong tables along the Riverwalk, replacement of wooden seating with aluminum planking on east end of arena and grandstand improvements at Sandy Downs, new paint on restrooms and shelters, construction of shelters and installation of drinking fountains for humans and dogs at the dog park (Director Holm noted this shelter was coordinated with the Airport per Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines/requirements), repair of pumps and ground work at Ryder Park, and ground work and prep work for relocating the power lines at Heritage Park. Per Mayor Casper, Mr. Campbell stated trees are replaced in parks as they are blown over, the old/outdated playground equipment is destroyed (for liability concerns), and the employees are temporarily relocated from Horticulture to Parks Maintenance (he believes those employees will be needed in the following year). Per Mayor Casper, Director Holm noted the playground equipment at The Dunes was purchased by The Dunes Home Owners Association (HOA). He agreed discussion will need to occur regarding additional park property and green space as he believes staff is tapped out, and the current parks property is the priority. Per Councilor Hally, Director Holm stated the playground at The Dunes is located on City-owned property and is open to the public.

September 8, 2020 Work Session

Director Holm reviewed the Rec Division effects of COVID-19 at the Aquatic Center – closed for more than 10 weeks with limited services following those 10 weeks; any program that required frequent contact was canceled; and the Rec Center – closed for more than 10 weeks, modified hours are continuing; the impact has effected facility use and revenue generation. Mr. Horsley believes consumer behavior has lost confidence in consistent available services.

Director Holm reviewed program participation including softball tournaments, girls' fast-pitch softball league, adult slow-pitch softball, youth baseball, Bobbie Sox/Knothole, youth volleyball, flag football, public and lap swim, swim lesson, and Kids Tri Harder Triathlon. He noted the largest subsidized facility in the Rec budget is the Aquatic Center. He believes the deficit will be larger than predicted due to COVID-19. He stated discussion will be occurring regarding a 3-5 year plan to get the Rec Fund back in the black, although there are struggles with COVID-19. Director Holm reviewed public swim, lap swim, and swim lesson participants. He believes swim lessons are a necessity in this area. Per Councilor Hally, Director Holm stated there is typically \$90,000 annual revenue in swim lessons, this amount is approximately \$4,000 in the current year. He also stated the seasonal employees at the Aquatic Center were furloughed during COVID to reduce expenses. Mr. Horsley noted swim lessons were not offered at the Aquatic Center per the EIPH guidelines issued. Director Holm noted swim lessons were occurring at private facilities, although he believed the City needed to lead by example and make the right decision for the community. Director Holm reviewed canceled programs including several basketball programs, tennis lessons, and Yoga classes. He stated many programs were canceled from April through July. In summary, COVID-19 created a revenue loss to the Rec Division. More importantly are the direct impacts COVID-19 has had on the mental and physical health of participants and the community. Director Holm expressed his appreciation to the Parks staff and Mr. Campbell for their assistance with the Aquatic Center. He also expressed his appreciation to Lowe's for donating maintenance equipment for all 22 baseball/softball fields in Idaho Falls. He stated P&R also reached out to the user groups for their assistance.

Golf Division – Director Holm stated the Golf Division staff has followed the COVID rules and regulations which have carried over to the customers who have also been very mindful and careful. Negative effects of COVID-19 – season pass sales and golf association dues are reduced, and company outings have been canceled for the most part. Positive effects – total revenues have increased approximately \$200,000 from 2019 which includes daily green fees, green fee punch passes, short course fees, cart rentals, and merchandise sales. Director Holm stated the Golf Division is working with other departments to fund a new irrigation system at Pinecrest Golf Course. This project will cost approximately \$3M. The Golf Division is also working with the Idaho Irrigation District to convert the course from ground water to surface water which will save more than 66M gallons of potable water annually. Director Holm displayed several pictures of downed trees at Pinecrest Golf Course following the recent storm.

Idaho Falls Zoo – Director Holm stated the zoo was closed during April and a portion of May. There have been no on-site educational programs, all events were canceled (with the exception of one (1) event by the Tautphaus Park Zoological Society (TPZS)), plans are being developed for virtual versions of other events, and attendance was reduced by 34% compared to the previous year. He reviewed several water conservation projects (in partnership with the Water Division), the Island Adventure Exhibit, and a new maintenance shop which was developed from the old 4H wash barn. Mr. Pennock stated these projects will be a time-savings to staff.

Director Holm reviewed cleanup projects for Funland. He also stated a Funland Committee has been formed.

Discussion of Proposed War Bonnet Round Up Rodeo Advisory Committee:

Director Holm stated this discussion has been occurring for the previous 1-2 years although the advisory committee has not been officially part of City Code Title 2 referencing boards, committees, commissions. He recommended formally establishing a committee with purpose, duties, composition, rules for appointment, attendance, meetings, removal, and rules. He stated the committee would include seven (7) voting members (there are currently 15 members on the committee) which would be non-City employees, and each member would have a three-year staggered term. Director Holm believes the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe should have a standing spot on this committee. Brief discussion and comments followed regarding the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe organization, and the number of days required for

September 8, 2020 Work Session

the annual report. Councilor Francis prefers the annual report timeframe be increased from 45 days to 60 days. Mayor Casper stated this item will be included on the September 10 Council Meeting agenda.

Discussion of Uncollectable Utility Service and Ambulance Accounts:

Director Alexander stated uncollectible ambulance and utility accounts are reviewed on an annual basis. She also stated there is a City Service Delivery Account Write-off Policy that provides a five-year period of no collection activity, and accurately reflects the City's uncollectible revenue for the external audit. Director Alexander stated the uncollectable 666 utility service (water, wastewater, electric, and sanitation) accounts = \$235,291.65. She noted this amount is for calendar year 2015. She also noted this amount is \$75,692 less than the previous year. Per Councilor Radford, Director Alexander anticipates this number to decrease due to standardization of policies.

Director Alexander recognized the ambulance committee consisting of herself, Mr. Roos, IFFD Division Chief Eric Day, IFFD Administrative Assistant Maria Escobar, and Utility Cashier Jennifer Strong. She stated this committee meets on a monthly basis, they also meet on a quarterly basis with the collection agency. She indicated the committee looks at those accounts requesting hardships as well as trends per the collection agency. The total ambulance write-off amount = \$2,641,390.71. Director Alexander stated the majority of this amount is due to Medicare/Medicaid which requires billing at the published/allowed rate, this rate may not be the actual rate paid. She noted many insurance carriers may not cover ambulance services. This write-off amount is for calendar year service dates of 2017 and 2019. Per Mayor Casper, Director Alexander stated the majority of the 2017 write-off is per the collection agency and the majority of the 2019 write-off is due to Medicare/Medicaid. She noted this amount is substantially lower than the previous year. She also noted the City uses three (3) collection agencies to assist with collections. Chief Nelson reiterated the Committee works diligently to find the best ways possible to collect the most money for this service. He also reiterated the amount of uncollectible rates from Medicare/Medicaid. Per Councilor Radford, Chief Nelson stated the law only allows one (1) rate for all individuals who may need ambulance service(s). Per Councilor Francis, Mr. Roos stated this Medicare/Medicaid write-off is not included in the red in the monthly Treasurer's Report for ambulance.

Director Alexander stated there have been a variety of uncollectable miscellaneous accounts for several years. She also stated delinquent parking tickets were reviewed for the previous 20 years as part of database clean-up. She noted there is no consequence for delinquent parking tickets as these do not go against a credit rating. Total uncollectable parking tickets and miscellaneous accounts for up to 2015 = \$91,200.64. Director Alexander stated this is the first year for this requested write-off. Mr. Roos believes this amount will decrease in future years. Mayor Casper stated these three (3) write-offs will be included on the September 10 Council Meeting agenda.

Review of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding serving in Idaho Falls School District #91:

Chief Johnson commended Capt. Squires for his work with the School Resource Program. He also commended the four (4) School Resource Officers (SRO). He stated the school district pays 70% for two (2) SROs and pays 50% for the remaining two (2) SROs. He believes this is a great partnership with the school district and makes a difference with the kids. Capt. Squires introduced Justin Hegstrom, Taylorview Middle School SRO; Dax Siddoway, Skyline High School SRO; Brian Smith, Idaho Falls High School SRO; and Chris Reed, Eagle Rock Middle School SRO. He noted these SROs also attend the feeder elementary schools. Capt. Squires stated he greatly values the role as a SRO. He also stated it takes a diverse individual to accommodate the different individuals in school operations. They must be excellent communicators, think creatively, be flexible, build a rapport with students, and satisfy parents/teachers/faculty/administration. Capt. Squires reviewed the previous school year statistics including calls for services, disturbances, and assault/battery. He also reviewed statistics these SROs performed within the Detective Division including calls for service, felony case investigations, sexual assaults, burglary/grand theft, robbery, and arson. Capt. Squires commended the SROs. He stated the SROs also perform informal counseling sessions with students, meet with parents/teachers/faculty, maintain safety at all sporting events, and teach classes. He believes the SROs are successful as the program is supported by the IFPD, and the SROs take pride and ownership in their respective schools. He also believes the SROs want a safe environment for kids. Chief Johnson then presented a video recognizing Officer Reed. He believes the SROs make an impact in peoples' lives. Councilor Francis expressed his appreciation with the philosophy of the SROs. Councilor Radford expressed his appreciation with the partnership of

September 8, 2020 Work Session

the City and the school district. Council President Dingman expressed her appreciation for the positive relationships with the SROs and the students. Per Mayor Casper, Officer Smith stated the SROs try to build relationships with the kids, including helping kids through bad behavior. He noted kids are all in different situations. Officer Reed stated the SRO triangle is teaching, mentoring, and law enforcement. He also stated the first priority is safety. Officer Hegstrom stated SROs can help kids stay, or get, onto the right path through proactive work. Chief Johnson commended the officers. Mayor Casper stated this MOU will be included on the September 10 Council Meeting agenda.

Presentation and Discussion of Amendments to Idaho Falls City Code – General Definitions:

Mr. Fife stated he has moved multiple definitions, spread throughout City Code, to the beginning of the code. This required renumbering or re-lettering of the definitions throughout the code. These amendments also define code definitions/structures. Mr. Fife stated there are no significant changes to any of the meanings. He noted the LLUPA and zoning designations may be presented in the future. He also noted items related to State or Federal regulations were kept internal to those chapters. Mr. Fife stated changes to gender neutral language will also occur in the future, and Title 2 may need to be more standardized. Per Councilor Smede, Mr. Fife briefly explained willfully versus knowingly. He noted this language is from the State Criminal Code as there is more body of interpretation in State Code than City Code. Brief comments followed. Mayor Casper stated this item will be included on the September 10 Council Meeting agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

s/ Kathy Hampton
Kathy Hampton, City Clerk

s/ Rebecca L. Noah Casper
Rebecca L. Noah Casper, Mayor