

CITY OF POCA TELLO, IDAHO
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
FEBRUARY 8, 2018

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Mayor Brian Blad called the City Council Study Session to order
ROLL CALL at 9:00 a.m. Council members present were Heidi Adamson,
Roger Bray, Rick Cheatum, Jim Johnston and Linda Leeuwrik.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Kent Hobbs, Chair Person, and Peggy Johnson, Treasurer,
AFRICAN SISTER CITIES from the African Sister Cities Subcommittee were present to
SUBCOMMITTEE discuss the African Subcommittee's goals and projects, as well as
UPDATE Council's policies and expectations.

Mr. Hobbs reviewed the activities of the Subcommittee. He stated a former resident of the village is currently attending Idaho State University.

Ms. Johnson reviewed fundraising activities the Subcommittee has done during the year such as fresh potato sales and a fun run. The Subcommittee would like to continue the educational sponsorships in the village and assist with enhancing medical facilities in the community.

Mr. Hobbs explained that all funds collected by the Subcommittee are sent to a designated committee in Africa which distributes the funds.

Ms. Johnson stated the Subcommittee receives an accounting of distributed funds from the committee in Africa.

Mr. Hobbs stated the last delegation visit was in 2010. He added that the country is politically stable and the people are warm and welcoming to the delegation.

Mr. Cheatum asked the Subcommittee representatives to share financial records and accounting information with the Council.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Scott Smith, Chair Person, and Melanie Gygli, Executive
POCA TELLO Director, were present to discuss the Pocatello Development
DEVELOPMENT Authority (PDA) goals and projects, as well as Council's policies
AUTHORITY UPDATE and expectations.

Mr. Smith gave a brief overview of the history of PDA and reviewed its achievements for 2017.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and their current status were reviewed. The districts reviewed were: North Yellowstone District; Naval Ordnance District; Airport District; and North Portneuf District. Mr. Smith stated the PDA also has a general fund which can be used in the form of loans or grants for economic development. He stated The Bridge restaurant was able to secure a PDA loan in order to relocate their facility to Old Town. Bully Dog qualified for a PDA grant to relocate their business to Pocatello. Mr. Smith clarified that Bully Dog has not requested the grant funds at this time, but those funds are allocated to Bully Dog, if they choose to use them.

In response to a question from Council, Mr. Smith stated it is the intention of the PDA to submit a request to the City Council for necessary permission regarding the implementation of a TIF District in the area of the Siphon Interchange project.

Mr. Smith stated it is not the PDA's intention to leave a TIF District open indefinitely. He added that some TIF Districts in the past have been closed earlier than anticipated. Mr. Smith stated the

North Yellowstone district may close early, after the debt is satisfied. The Naval Ordnance District property is currently under litigation between property owners, and will be eligible to close after the legal issues are resolved between the private property owners. Mr. Smith reported that the PDA finances are very healthy and have reserves in all accounts, as the Committee is quite conservative with finances. He added that the committee welcomes input from the Council and members of the public.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Melanie Gygli, Planning and Development Services Director, PROPOSED Terri Neu, Associate Planner, and Carl Anderson, Senior AMENDMENTS TO Planner, were present to discuss proposed changes to Reader POCATELLO SIGN Boards section (15.20.160) and Off Premises/Billboard signs ORDINANCE section (15.20.240) of the Pocatello Sign Ordinance. SECTION 15.20 UPDATE.

Council discussion regarding illumination and dimming standards, sign curfews and appropriate sign placement.

Mayor Blad expressed appreciation to sign companies for their input and cooperation with City staff regarding the development of proposed amendments.

In response to questions from Council, Ms. Neu stated the electronic billboards currently located on Yellowstone Avenue are not adjacent to residential properties and therefore, have not caused issues with surrounding properties. She added that light pollution from static signs can also be an issue.

Ms. Gygli stated a local sign contractor is willing to guide Council members on a tour of on-premise and off-premise signs in various areas of the city in order to give Council members a better idea of sign settings, light measurement techniques and lighting standards.

Council members expressed interest in participating in such a tour.

In response to a question from Council, Kent Marboe, Lamar Advertising representative, stated the City of Idaho Falls requires a sign code policy agreement to be signed by the business owner/electronic sign owner as part of the sign permit application process. Staff added that detailing the specifications during the application process provides business owners and sign contractors a clear understanding of the requirements.

Mr. Marboe added that Lamar equipment, such as static billboard lighting, is turned off at a specific time of night and electronic billboards are equipped with dimmers. He stated that less vandalism occurs when signs are illuminated.

Ms. Gygli stated it may not be necessary to include language in the ordinance to contain provisions for owners when a business is bought or sold, as the code requirements remain the same from owner to owner.

Ms. Gygli stated that sign code changes related to electronic signs are intended to be applied to both on-premise and off-premise signs. These policies would also apply to reader boards located at schools.

Council and Planning staff members discussed the options regarding notification requirements. The current policy requires notification to residents within 200 feet of a proposed sign within

commercially zoned areas. Industrial and Light Industrial areas do not require any noticing to surrounding property owners. Staff provided the Council with maps comparing various properties and potential noticing requirement areas. The diagrams gave a visual representation of properties located within a 200, 300 and 500 foot radius of current electronic billboards.

Council members stated that they are in favor of increasing the notification area to a 300 foot radius of the proposed sign location, to remain consistent with other land use requirements.

Mr. Anderson clarified that staff would prepare changes to reflect issues regarding curfew requirements, policies regarding business owner changes and surrounding property owner notification requirements.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: Justin Armstrong, Water Superintendent; Cindy Robbins, WATERSMART Utility Billing Director; and Dominique Gomez, WaterSmart SOFTWARE Software representative, gave a presentation on customer service PRESENTATION software that would allow utility customers to better understand and manage their water use; receive timely alerts and notifications; and make bill pay easier.

Ms. Robbins stated Water Department and Utility Billing staff has examined the possible use of WaterSmart software in order for utility customers to have a better understanding of their water consumption and billing information.

Dominique Gomez, WaterSmart representative, stated that consumers have high expectations for all utilities, especially instant, online access to usage and consumption alerts. WaterSmart works in conjunction with current infrastructure and water meter equipment. Data is collected by the City of Pocatello Utility Billing and Water Departments and that data is combined with weather data, census and real estate information to create a customer profile. WaterSmart can provide a customer portal which could alert the consumer of possible leaks or high usage, send reminders regarding service changes, outages and payment information. Ms. Gomez explained that customer usage of the WaterSmart portal increases over time and is available via home computer or mobile phone. She added that the portal allows the user to have instant access to previous billing information, current water usage, comparisons to similar households and offer water-saving recommendations.

Ms. Robbins added that out of 18,000 utility accounts, fewer than 2,000 accounts have email information on file.

Ms. Gomez gave a demonstration of the software. In response to questions from Council, Ms. Gomez stated bill collection is not the main focus of WaterSmart, but the ability to contact customers immediately and create account awareness has shown to decrease the payment time for bill delinquencies. She explained that WaterSmart can also be utilized to stop, start or transfer service.

Ms. Robbins stated that all but 4,400 utility accounts are read through the use of radio read equipment, and that all customer meters will be radio read (instead of manually-read) within two years. She added that the cost to introduce WaterSmart for 18,000 utility accounts would be \$46,700 for the first year to include software purchase and the \$25,500 annually. Ms. Robbins explained that the additional cost would be \$1.42 per account, or \$0.12 per month, per customer. She stated other utility companies use similar products to show usage, set billing dates and alerts and work proactively with utility customers.

In response to a question from Council, Ms. Robbins explained that the option to enroll in the Utility Billing level pay feature requires one year of actual usage data. The customer is then billed according to their average usage throughout the year and recalculated on an annual basis.

Mr. Armstrong stated in addition to providing actual data to each customer, use of the software would also allow the Water Department to provide customers with alerts regarding planned or emergency outages. He indicated that instant, accurate data could help the Water Department focus on areas in need of improvement and reduce the need for staff assistance. Having customers enrolled in the system allows staff to ensure that the customer is receiving alerts and notices regarding their service.

Mayor Blad called a recess at 11:05 a.m.

Mayor Blad reconvened the meeting at 11:13 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: Heather Buchanan, Human Resources Director, was in attendance to present potential policy and administration changes to streamline the City's employee education benefit process.

PROPOSED CITY
EMPLOYEE EDUCATION
AND POLICY
ADMINISTRATION
CHANGES

Ms. Buchanan gave an overview of the current employee education policy and offered various options for possible changes to the policy. She clarified that the current policy has not been reviewed for approximately 10 - 15 years and is only one portion of the Employee Handbook being considered for review at this time. Ms. Buchanan reported that department heads are asked to consider education benefits during the annual budget process. She added that spending within the employee education fund has been historically under budget. Ms. Buchanan added that education benefits are a part of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Fire Union and are not subject to the potential changes. She reported that the Police and Fire Departments are the departments which utilize the education benefit the most. Ms. Buchanan stated many Police Department employees are utilizing the education benefits to obtain degrees, as education credits are a requirement to advance in rank.

Ms. Buchanan gave an overview of possible policy changes regarding job-specific requirements, potential reimbursement to the City, employment longevity requirements and a possible application process for benefits.

Council asked Ms. Buchanan to provide information regarding the number of employees who have earned degrees through the City's education benefit.

Ms. Leeuwrik stated she feels all education is valuable and can enhance an employee's ability to be productive in their role within the City. She is not in favor of limiting the type of degree being pursued by employees or as a requirement for eligibility of the benefit.

In response to a question from Council, Joyce Stroschein, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer, stated that she would be in favor of creating a fund specific to education benefits in order for departments to allocate funds specifically for employee education reimbursement. She added that if the fund is created for that purpose, she recommends having the Human Resources Department manage the fund in order to remain equitable for departments. Ms. Stroschein clarified that if an employee is

attending Idaho State University, funds are distributed at the beginning of the class. If an employee is attending a different accredited university, including online classes, the funds are distributed as a reimbursement after the employee provides documentation outlining successful completion of the course.

Mr. Johnston indicated he would be interested in addressing the issue more in depth during the budget process.

Mr. Bray stated he would be interested in learning what the policies are for other municipalities.

Mayor Blad adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

At 11:50 a.m. Mayor Blad and Council members Adamson, Cheatum, Johnston and Leeuwrik left the Council Chambers and met for an “informal lunch” in the Paradise Conference Room.

APPROVED:

BRIAN C. BLAD, MAYOR

ATTEST:

RUTH E. WHITWORTH, CMC, CITY CLERK

PREPARED BY:

KONNI R. KENDELL, DEPUTY CLERK