

City of Rock Springs)
County of Sweetwater)
State of Wyoming)

City Council met in special session on April 11, 2019. Mayor Timothy A. Kaumo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Members present included Councilors Keaton West, Billy Shalata, and Jeannie Demas. Councilors Glennise Wendorf, David Halter, Tim Savage, Rob Zotti, and David Tate were absent from the meeting. Department heads present included Dave Lansang, Matt Keslar for Dwane Pacheco, Matthew McBurnett, Jim Wamsley and Rick Beckwith. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

RECYCLING CENTER

Mayor Kaumo stated that this meeting is called regarding the Recycling Center program and whether the center will survive or not survive. This will be a brainstorming session to talk about future plans and funding ideas, whether they be donations or other. The recycling program has been present for many years in the city of Rock Springs. A moral obligation to do what is right is present in this situation. It is our job to make this planet the best that we can and to keep recyclables out of the landfill. Mayor Kaumo stated that although it is not profitable to recycle, it is the right thing to do. Councilor Shalata added that this is very near to his heart and that he makes a strong effort to recycle and it feels good to recycle. He asked how much room we have in the landfill, and included that 1.25 million pounds of recyclables being prevented from going to the landfill is huge. Councilor West stated that the City gets a lot of comments regarding not supporting the Recycling Center, but it has given, since fiscal year 2013, a total \$525,516.52. Mayor Kaumo stated that when he was Mayor previously, City employees worked at the Recycling Center and that the Center staff does a great job doing what they can with what they have. Mayor Kaumo then asked Devon Brubaker, President of the Recycling Center Board, to provide an update of where the Center is currently.

Current Operations Overview

Devon Brubaker, Recycling Center Board President, thanked everyone for attending and stated that this is an important issue in our community. Recycling is important and it is not only products, but lives too, with the employees being at stake if the Center closes. The Recycling Center takes pride in providing opportunities to those with colorful backgrounds or developmental disabilities as well, and the staff does a great job at the Recycling Center. He included that business decisions must be made, and the board recognizes that. Recycling is not a profitable business, and most other recycling organizations also do something else that is for profit. Park City has a store where they re-sell home materials as homes are torn down, in order to help fund their recycling center. The statistics from 2018-2019 were discussed. Mr. Brubaker included that the recycling markets have dropped considerably and the Recycling Center is holding 125,000 pounds of cardboard from the month of March in the hopes that the market will turn around. Mayor Kaumo asked what drives the market value, and Mr. Brubaker stated that 70% of our recyclables were shipped to China, and with America's waste stream being very contaminated, that has caused China to put strict regulations on the recyclables coming from America which then reduces their value. Supply and demand drive any market, including this one.

Future Business Plan

On a positive note, Mr. Brubaker added that there are dozens of cardboard or paper mills being built throughout America because the need to stop shipping product out internationally is recognized. This will cause a better balance in supply and demand. A company in Salt Lake City is turning all plastics into diesel fuel and unleaded fuel and the fuel is legal to be sold. The process will be downsized and given to small recycling centers like the one here to turn plastics into fuel, and Mr. Brubaker stated that this fuel could run

the vehicles that do recyclable pickup. There are also mills creating OSB board and other wood products that sell at a smaller cost than regular OSB board and other wood products.

Mayor Kaumo stated that some education should be given to the public regarding what can and cannot be recycled and that our recycling center is not a dump. It is very time consuming for recycling center staff to sort through what is and is not recyclable. Mayor Kaumo asked Devon what the status is of the center now and what the future will look like.

Mr. Brubaker stated that funding of at least \$50-60,000 is needed to get through June 30, 2019. On an annual basis, \$189,500 is needed to run the center. There have been more than 184 volunteers in the center for the month of March, and volunteering is critical to the process. There are 3 full time and 4 part time employees and the Fire Department has recently come down to the center to help as well. If more volunteer hours are driven, labor costs can stay low, even though a CDL driver is needed to drive the recyclable collection truck. Movement cameras have been donated and it has been recorded that 300 movements are being tracked every day, some of which are employees, but most are drop-offs. The management style at the center is afraid in nature, just trying to pay overhead in order to stay running. Grand Junction has a successful curbside program, and the board here have big ideas to do things like this. Product processing has increased significantly between last year and now.

Mayor Kaumo asked Mr. Brubaker what his thoughts are regarding curbside pickup. Mr. Brubaker replied that curbside would be doable, but that it would need to have some sort of fee associated because it would not be profitable. Grand Junction contracts with a private entity who is a for-profit business, and offers the residents a once per month curbside pickup which is pre-sorted by the residents and the trailer has segmented compartments to keep the products separated. Green River has single stream recyclable pickup and the value is dramatically reduced if paper gets wet, etc. Mayor Kaumo stated that he asked a few citizens and they would all be willing to add a fee to trash pickup for curbside recycling. Mayor Kaumo asked whether \$30,000 or so be feasibly possible. Mr. Brubaker stated that this would have to be studied a bit more to determine how that would fit into the process.

Mayor Kaumo asked Jared Leisch, sales representative at Wyoming Waste Systems, what his opinion is on recycling and whether curbside pickup looks like a possibility. Mr. Leisch stated that Wyoming Waste would love an opportunity to transport recyclables, but unfortunately, \$1.00 per resident would not be enough. Mr. Leisch estimated that it would be along the same lines as regular refuse pickup currently, which is about \$35.00 per month. Certain vehicles would need to be purchased to keep the recyclables separate. Mayor Kaumo asked whether other communities are provided this service, and Mr. Leisch confirmed that many communities on the coasts participate, but that the concern is that many residents here would not participate.

Mayor Kaumo called Glen Walton with Pacific Steel Assistant Manager. Recycling is not a profitable business and Pacific Steel is in it to make money. Mayor Kaumo asked if baling is done at Pacific Steel itself and Mr. Walton confirmed. Mayor Kaumo asked how it is shipped out and Mr. Walton stated that it is by truck.

Funding Mechanisms/Options

Councilor West asked Mr. Brubaker why the board stopped charging for recyclable pickup. Mr. Brubaker stated that the board plans to start charging again for pickups, if the center doesn't close. April Thompson, Housing and Community Development Manager, should be able to provide more information as to why the board stopped charging previously. The board will charge about \$15-20 per month per bin for pickup services. An issue is that taxes are already being collected with refuse collection, so charging more wouldn't make much sense. Wyoming Waste is charging a fee to residents, which covers the landfill fee,

which is \$55 per ton. Charges, taxes, and fees are completely separate between Rock Springs and Green River.

Andy Foster, Chairman of Solid Waste District Board, addressed the Governing Body. Councilor Shalata asked how much room is at the landfill currently. Mr. Foster stated that there are 4 cells left in the current lot, and one was just recently opened. Councilor Shalata asked how long the landfill could operate on the current space. Kevin Harmon, General Manager for Solid Waste District, stated that there are 25 years left on the 50 acres at the landfill, based on current volumes. The district does own 300 acres to the south of the current lot, although much research needs to be done to begin the permitting process to extend the landfill in that direction. Councilor Shalata asked whether this would be without recycling, and Mr. Harmon confirmed that this estimation is for current disposal rates. Councilor Shalata asked the Solid Waste District Board about the \$60,000 that is supposed to be allocated to the Recycling Center. When the Recycling Center began, it was mainly for the benefit of the Housing Authority and to give residents something to do. Mr. Harmon added that when he came to the district 11 years ago, they encouraged the Recycling Center to grow and to do curbside pickup, etc., which the Recycling Center looked at. Dora Holbert, past Housing and Community Development Director, provided excellent reports, and with staff changes, reports were not given and it was decided that funding would be stopped. Mayor Kaumo clarified that the funding was around \$110,000. He asked whether the Recycling Center has fulfilled their requirements to receive the funding again. Mr. Foster stated that the Recycling Center came to the Board and asked for funding, and brainstorming was conducted to figure out how to fund them. Mayor Kaumo asked whether the funding would be released, and Mr. Foster stated that it should, and that the meeting has been rescheduled from this Tuesday, April 9, 2019 to next Tuesday, April 16, 2019, due to the lack of a quorum. Mayor Kaumo stated that it is important to the Governing Body to continue recycling. Mr. Foster confirmed that it is also important to the Solid Waste District Board, as long as the Recycling Center provides monthly reports and keeps them apprised of their activities. Mr. Brubaker stated that two reports have been submitted this year and that the board would like to be transparent to the Solid Waste District regarding their operations in order to make this work.

Mayor Kaumo stated that his biggest concern is getting on the same page before June 30. Mr. Brubaker stated that the Solid Waste District Board has trouble keeping a quorum to do business, which makes business transactions difficult. Mr. Foster stated that \$42,200 is what would be released. It was added that 1.25 million pounds of garbage, only adds up to \$34,000 per year. Mayor Kaumo replied that the main goal is keeping recyclables out of the landfill not necessarily the dollar value associated with it.

Mr. Brubaker stated that he has applied for a grant to re-organize the outside of the recycling center to make operations more efficient. Mayor Kaumo asked about taking a look at options for roto-mill, etc. and that he feels that all have a buy-in regarding the importance of recycling in our community. Mayor Kaumo asked if mailers for donations in water bills would help, and Mr. Brubaker stated that if the center stays open, that mailers would be a good option. He added that stable funding is needed permanently, and that the three most important things here are: People, Service, and keeping recyclables out of the landfill. Councilor West stated that funding of \$42,200 would leave the center short by \$17,800 currently, to which Mr. Brubaker agreed. Mr. Brubaker stated that a reliable funding mechanism must be present for this to be a viable program. Mayor Kaumo asked what the funding make-up is, which was determined to be the mill levy and user fees.

Mr. Foster added that if a quorum is present, the funds will most likely be released. It was also added that on a long term basis, the Solid Waste District Board is concerned, with their budget cycle coming up. Mayor Kaumo stated that we all have budget issues, but saving money is not the main goal, the main goal is to utilize the funds in a way that the community wants the funds used, while saving just enough to operate for a few months if something were to happen.

General Discussion

Kira Seppie - President of WWCC Eco Club – addressed the Governing Body and stated that the Eco Club has been volunteering at the Recycling Center over the past semester and they have learned much about recycling from this. Education is important about what can and cannot be recycled. Recycling is something that people want to be a part of, and the community then realizes its importance. Once people become environmentally conscious by recycling, other steps are taken to be more environmentally responsible. A project was done to incorporate recycling bins in all of the high school classrooms to collect data and to work with the Recycling Center once recyclables were collected. Councilor Shalata said that as JFK says, “We don’t go to the moon because it’s easy, we go to the moon because it’s hard.” Mayor Kaumo stated that back in 2003, City-Wide Cleanup was formed and now we are discussing the possible closure of the center, which is unfortunate.

Tina Chambers – Resident – Many people read SweetwaterNOW online, maybe a vote could be taken regarding the possibility of adding a fee to trash pickup for recycling. Many go out of their way to go to the center or to recycle plastics at Wal-Mart, and that most would probably be willing to recycle out of the convenience of their own home by paying for curbside pickup. Ms. Chambers also asked that Wal-Mart or somewhere could donate trees or flowers to help beautify the Recycling Center. She added that in China, there is a tax added to the purchase of plastics and once returned, a small return is given back to the consumer. Big cities are doing a ban on plastic bags or single use plastics and straws, and she asked whether this would be a possibility here.

Mayor Kaumo stated that many residents have great ideas and that plastic bags are a huge problem here, so considering that would be smart.

Kevin Harper – Resident – stated that he agrees with the discussion taking place here. Mr. Harper grew up in Oregon where in middle school science courses, recycling was part of the curriculum. Communities all over the world have been doing this for a long time, and we live close to larger cities such as Denver or Salt Lake City who have tackled these issues before. Paying a fee is part of waste management for recycling and many in larger communities are used to that.

Matt Dillon – Manager at Ray Lovato Recycling Center – stated that the future business plan is to start charging for cardboard pickups and to get more containers for more businesses to continue recycling, to save space in the landfill, which will save businesses money on trash pickup. Another idea is to see if Able Hands would be willing to volunteer at the Recycling Center. With the proper funding and the right support, Rock Springs could lead the way in recycling with the Recycling Center. Preventing recyclables from going into the landfill are a big goal. Food waste is a big deal right now, and many grants could be obtained to start this program for making compost. This funding is causing unnecessary stress on staff and board members. Mr. Dillon added that there are options to look at not only for funding, but to better our planet.

Mayor Kaumo stated that elected officials take for granted what it means to throw something away and that citizens should try putting their recyclables in bags for two weeks, to see how much really goes into the landfill.

Randy McConnell – Resident – Mr. McConnell has an idea regarding rolling up cardboard to make bundles and sell them to citizens as firewood. He added that the world is changing all the time and right now, the world is leaning much more towards taking care of our earth. As far as taxes go, let’s look at putting a piece of that towards this purpose, for the Recycling Center. They operate as well as they can with not much for resources. The Recycling Center needs to know what their funding is. Why are we paying taxes towards this purpose if it is not being paid to where we, as citizens, want it to go? Mayor Kaumo agrees that the Recycling Center must be able to plan for their budget annually. Mr. McConnell stated that in the

future, he would like to see the Recycling Center as a jewel in our community and to beautify it, as others have said.

Maria Mortensen – Resident – Ms. Mortensen stated that recycling and picking up garbage are imperative to our community. She stated that Mr. Brubaker and Mr. Dillon work very hard and it's not fair for them to have to worry about funding constantly. As citizens, shoppers, and consumers, we need to do what is right and keep recyclables out of our landfill. Neighborhood efforts are being made in her neighborhood to encourage recycling, and she encouraged the Solid Waste District Board to work with the Recycling Center to improve the relationship, and not let a bad past affect the future. She suggested that a board member from the Recycling Center and the Solid Waste District Board attend each other's meetings to keep informed.

Larissa Abel – Environmental Science Teacher at RSHS – 2 years ago, when Recycling Center was on the verge of closing, she re-started the recycling program at the high school and it has been difficult to get everyone on board including administration and students. Ms. Abel is trying to do the education piece in the high school as well, and added that the mill levy is approved up to 3 mills and that we are only charging 2.24 mills. Could we charge a point or two that would be earmarked for the Recycling Center that would happen every year? Ms. Able added that Peak Disposal said when they first started, they weren't ready for curbside pickup, but with each holding franchise agreements with the City, the City could put some pressure on the waste management franchisees to recycle. Jared Leisch replied that with Wyoming Waste Management being a for-profit corporation, if recycling is profitable, they would be willing to do it. He believes that education should be given to citizens to put recyclables in the right bins. Recycling education should be more of a community project.

Councilor Demas asked how many bins one would need to do recycling correctly at home. Mr. Leisch stated that it depends on how you want to sort it. Co-mingled recycling causes contamination, so separating recycling is in our Recycling Center's best interests, according to Mr. Brubaker. Keeping paper and cardboard separate from glass and plastic is imperative.

Jared Leisch stated that for a big implementation to be successful, that a mandate should be considered, which may be difficult, but would get the whole community on board. Councilor West asked how much wind-waste is experienced in Green River. Mr. Leisch stated that although this happens, it doesn't seem to be of much concern currently.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

By: _____
Council President

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor