

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

City Council met in special session on April 21, 2021. Mayor Timothy A. Kaumo called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Members present included Councilors Rob Zotti, Keaton West, Brent Bettolo, Jeannie Demas, David Halter, and Larry Hickerson. Councilor Tim Robinson was absent from the meeting. Department Heads present included Paul Kauchich, Dave Lansang, Matthew L. McBurnett, Jim Wamsley, Dwane Pacheco, Rick Beckwith, and Scott Nelson. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Mayor Kaumo made welcoming comments.

## **OUTSIDE AGENCY REQUESTS**

### **Community Fine Arts Center**

Debora Soule, Director of the CFAC stated that the Mayor's Arts Awards this year are still live online and that it was a successful initiative. It is a privilege to recognize arts entities and individuals who add value to the community. Mayor Kaumo added that during COVID, skills have been increased when it comes to technology such as Zoom, etc. Because no large events have been held, funds have been funneled to smaller things and the CFAC has co-sponsored Downtown events. The Center's request has been reduced, as \$18,000 is being carried over from last year for City funding. The County is cutting the program further, so hours for staff will be reduced. Blues n' Brews was moved to June, so a contribution will be made towards that. Expanding programs was stated to be the priority for additional funding, if awarded. Mayor Kaumo stated that the CFAC does a great job and the hope is that sales tax and tourism will increase soon.

Mayor Kaumo added that the percentages of cuts requested of Departments and Outside Agencies were between 25-30% and currently, the requests sit all over the board.

### **Rock Springs Library**

Jason Grubb, County Library Director, thanked Ms. Soule for her service at the CFAC. Ordinance 2021-02 was stated to be a positive thing for the library system. He thanked the City for its support of the Children's Discovery Center, attendance numbers have been wonderful since it opened. Adjustments have been made everywhere, especially at the County level. The Library reduced its request from the City by 30% this year. Dollars will not be contributed toward youth or adult programming, but the Library Foundation will be raising funds to keep these programs running. The request will go toward the maintenance and the care of the building. Mayor Kaumo asked if anything were to be added back into the budget, what the priority would be for the extra funding awarded. Mr. Grubb stated that using additional funding would go toward youth programs. Any costs that can be offset for that program would help immensely. Mr. Grubb stated that he appreciates being asked this question, because the cuts offered have been a leap. Mayor Kaumo stated that the amount of kids that go through the library buildings in Rock Springs makes its youth programs incredibly valuable.

Mayor Kaumo added that with the library cuts offered, the City Council would like to consider what is important to the community and to consider additional funding use, should it be awarded.

### **Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce**

Rick Lee, CEO of the Rock Springs Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Chamber understands the challenges all are facing as a City, and as a community. The Chamber has been around for many decades and they are hoping that they can continue to perform necessary tasks. The Chamber presents a 30% budget cut this fiscal year and understands the necessity. Councilor West stated that it might not be a full 30%. Discussion took place regarding where the 30% cut came from. Councilor West asked what is new and happening at the Chamber. Mr. Lee stated that there are new requests coming in for tourism and relocation, which is exciting. New prospects for the White Mountain Mall are coming and announcements should be coming soon. Mayor Kaumo is working on some very exciting business prospects, and things seem promising. The Chamber is trying to encourage existing businesses to stay positive and keep plugging away. While Jackson claims to be the high point of Wyoming, Rock Springs has a wonderful quality of life also. Things are stable, not earth shattering or groundbreaking, but not failing either. Mayor Kaumo stated that he received a call from the broker for the First Security Bank building regarding an investor that wants to take over all of the office spaces in the building, which is exciting news. Mayor Kaumo asked Mr. Lee what additional funds would be used for, if the budget were increased. Mr. Lee stated that recruitment would be the priority with additional funding. Despite the SEDC moving out of the Chamber building, they still work closely together.

### **STAR Transit Authority**

Mary Seppie, Director of STAR Transit, stated that she has taken Judy Owens' place at STAR Transit. STAR is offering a 30% cut, as requested. The buses ran through the entire pandemic, excluding the fixed route. There is a reason citizens are taking public transit - they cannot afford transportation otherwise. Most times during the pandemic, the buses offered the only outing that many riders saw in a day. Their primary source of funding are FTA Funds. The cities provide the match for FTA Funds, which must be demonstrated to receive funding. The last quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 were not billed due to additional funding received from the FTA. Amounts being requested from each entity, Rock Springs, Green River, and the County were summarized. Any CARES Act funding received will help to fulfill any additional funding needed to meet the match required by the FTA. Councilor Zotti asked for clarification on the cut offered and whether it was from the original request or from what was actually rewarded. Councilor Zotti also asked if the City's match is dollar-for-dollar with FTA, which Ms. Seppie confirmed. Every dollar cut from the City would result in a larger cut from the FTA.

### **Red Desert Roundup Rodeo**

Lauren Reed, Treasurer for the Red Desert Roundup Rodeo, stated that in 2020 the rodeo was canceled due to COVID. The Board has discussed how the 2021 Rodeo can be paid for, and what cuts can be made. Funding comes from the City, the County, Travel and Tourism, ticket sales, and participants of the rodeo. Thursday night usually has the lowest attendance, so Thursday night was eliminated, which is a cut of 15%. Ticket sales revenue is unknown at this time, so there will be no increase to ticket costs this year. In 2019, \$12,000 was awarded by the City, and in 2021, the request is \$8,400. No CARES funding was awarded, as the association does not qualify for 501(c)4 status. Mayor Kaumo agreed that it is unknown as to how many will be out enjoying activities like this one. He confirmed that if additional funding were awarded, Thursday night Rodeo would not be brought back. Ms. Reed confirmed.

### **Treatment Court of Sweetwater County**

A representative from Treatment Court of Sweetwater County was not present at the meeting.

### **Joint Powers Combined Communications Board**

Rick Hawkins, Executive Director of the Joint Powers Combined Communications Center, stated that the Center's budget request includes several different options for budgets to include a 15% cut, a 20% cut, and a 25.6% cut. Many different funding mechanisms were examined in the process. 1-5 personnel cuts were included, along with partner entities taking on additional duties currently performed by the Center. Presented with that, the Finance Committee directed Mr. Hawkins to obtain a 15% cut to its budget. In Fiscal Year 2021, a 10% cut to each entity resulted in a total of 18.58% to the total budget. Managing these kinds of cuts have resulted from cash carryover and reserve funds. Mayor Kaumo asked why we are among the lowest of 911 costs in the nation. Mr. Hawkins stated that although we are not the lowest, we are close. He added that the State sets the maximum fees for the service. The issue was last addressed in 1986-1990, but most recently prepaid cell phones were discussed to not be paying a 911 fee, since they do not pay a bill after service. The Center cannot audit records regarding fees collected for 911, so it is unknown how many lines are not paying, or remitting, the fee. Mayor Kaumo asked if the Board has done any lobbying at the State level. NextGen 911 has a bill in the house, addressing how 911 is funded across the nation. The current challenge is that not all counties in the State even charge the maximum amount per line for the 911 fee. Regardless, not charging the maximum does not help the case to increase that amount. In 2012, a percentage was agreed upon, with Rock Springs' share sitting at 34%. Mayor Kaumo asked what drove the percentages. These amounts were partially due to population surge, call volumes, and for dispersal of some unknown grant fund. He stated that there are 25 employees at the Center now, asking how many were at the Center in 2012. Mr. Hawkins stated that there were 24, along with one part time employee. Mayor Kaumo stated that the intent was to consolidate and increase efficiency, but with the same amount of employees and other things remaining the same, he sees that consolidation has not really taken place. Many different things would be required of separate entities, so Mr. Hawkins stated that the resources have been combined so instead of purchasing three of everything, only one will be needed with a centralized dispatch center. Mayor Kaumo stated that Laramie and Cheyenne County run their entire Dispatch Center with nine employees compared to our twenty. The concern is clear here. Mr. Hawkins confirmed that he feels all staff is necessary. There are five dispatchers on staff at once, when the required amount is four. Councilor Zotti asked what the other counties are running, how many dispatchers versus other staff are on payroll. Mr. Hawkins stated in Laramie and Cheyenne County the director is hired and answers directly to the County Commissioners, with the building being owned by the Counties and using County resources. Mayor Kaumo asked what the opinion is regarding improving services and efficiency. Mayor Kaumo asked if it would be logical to adjust percentages to be even across the entities, which Mr. Hawkins stated he may agree with, but it depends on the Combined Communications Board and their wishes. Two ways to improve this would be having neighboring entities charge up to the maximum for the 911 line, and evening out percentages. We all have ownership of the Dispatch Center and we all get the same benefit from it. The amounts should be even. Mayor Kaumo would like to consider the structure and be sure that it is distributed based on benefits offered to the community. Councilor Zotti addressed the tax issue and stated reasons for keeping up with taxes and trends in the industry. Pursuing the ability to tax more and generate more revenue for that is important. Councilor Halter stated that no other entity in Wyoming operates on a Joint Powers Board or a central 911 center like Sweetwater County does. Amounts from Laramie County were summarized, along with specifications as to what the County pays for, so much of the center is intermixed with other budgets, so there are no apples-to-apples comparisons to provide. Much of the radio infrastructure is maintained at a very high quality in Sweetwater County. Technology is improving vastly and needs to stay updated. Mr. Hawkins confirmed that costs, in order to keep up with technology, will continue to increase regularly. Councilor West stated that it is not truly apples-to-apples, but nonetheless it is a vast difference between the counties. He asked if there was any discussion for reducing the amount requested from funding entities, which was stated the last cut came last year from reserves, which are depleted at this time. Councilor Bettolo asked whether the Board has considered relocating the Combined Communications Center to a City or County facility. There may be cost savings from operating within another entity's building. With the building being invested in, it would be difficult to relocate at this point. Councilor Halter added that it has been a massive undertaking and being able to move into another facility would require much rewiring, cooling, etc. Mayor Kaumo thanked Mr. Hawkins for his input and stated

that the percentage share will be reviewed and considered for adjustment. Councilor Halter and Mr. Hawkins confirmed that the County is receiving a very good deal for the combined communications services it receives from the center. Mayor Kaumo stated that if all three entities are truly to be combined, they must be combined more equitably. The shares were restated as 43% for Rock Springs, 32% for Green River, and 25% Sweetwater County.

### **Southwest Wyoming Regional Airport**

Devon Brubaker, Director of the Southwest Wyoming Regional Airport, stated that the aviation industry is struggling in the wake of the pandemic. Passenger enplanements are down. Quantity of aviation fuel sold is down 21.26%. Percentages are down everywhere. The past 12-14 months has brought continuous downturns. The federal government has established that aviation is incredibly important to economic development. Funding has been received from the CARES Act and the CRISA grant. Each of the grant funds must be used for operational expenses or actual responses to the pandemic. A 13.5% reduction is offered. This budget is largely due to significant increases in property and liability insurance, fuel costs, and janitorial services. The Commercial Terminal Modernization project is up and running, so non-operational expenses will be up by over \$19 million at this time. Metal prices have influenced many costs of this project. The local cost of the project has been maintained at \$1.3 million, due to securing additional grant funding. Fiscal year 2022 capital-funding items were summarized. \$300,000 emergency cash flow reserves are designated for this year, and \$172,000 in reserves are restricted for several different purposes. For every dollar cut, a total of \$3 must be cut for all entities who provide funding. In the early 2030's the runway is expected to be at the end of its life after a mill and overlay in 2016. The current projection is \$45 million to complete the project, so reserves are being set aside for that match now, to reduce the impact later. Mayor Kaumo stated that Mr. Brubaker does a wonderful job at the airport. For every improvement made, the economy improves. Attempting to obtain new revenue streams is important and going to the legislature to ask for districting of airports was a respected effort. Councilor West thanked Mr. Brubaker for the 30% cut, resulting in saving the City \$84,000.

### **Young-at-Heart Senior Center**

Misty Wilson, bookkeeper at the Young at Heart Senior Center, stated that this past year has been a difficult one but the Center got lucky with grant funding recently, and the center has reopened. A 35% cut is proposed for this budget year. Positions will be cut, and other revenue sources are coming in soon as well. Grant funding is helping with normal Center activities. Councilor Savage asked if any of the money is needed for matching for other programs, which Ms. Wilson confirmed that it is. Every \$1 cut is a \$2 loss. Mayor Kaumo asked what the priority would be, should additional funding be awarded. Ms. Wilson stated that if there were some ability to put funding back, re-funding a custodial position would help. Councilor Savage stated that the program is vital and keeps seniors in their homes longer than they would be without the programs. With the pandemic hitting, so much personal touch was lost.

A brief recess was called at 7:03 p.m. The meeting resumed at 7:08 p.m.

## **DEPARTMENT REQUESTS**

The budget committee spent several lengthy meetings with each department looking at their budgets.

Engineering/Operations & Public Services was first to be discussed. No questions were asked. Matthew L. McBurnett, City Clerk, expressed that the document in front of the Governing Body today is in very rough draft form. The May 4 Council Meeting will contain the preliminary budget, and the June 15 Council Meeting will contain the proposed budget.

Councilor Zotti confirmed the adjusted budget amount. The request for this year has been cut by 6.8%. Mr. McBurnett stated that new spending usually comes out of the preliminary and proposed budget, which means that some numbers will differ due to encumbrances, etc. Apples-to-apples comparisons are difficult to make at this point, with multiple different budgets in play.

Twenty-six positions have been defunded. They still exist yet are unfunded. There is a mix of full time, part time and seasonal employees with the bulk being seasonal employees.

Councilor Zotti reminded the Council that with some of the budgets seen, they are small enough to where is not much available to cut. Cuts are based on the size of the department. The Mayor and Council budget was cut by 23%.

Paul Kauchich, Director of Engineering/Operations & Public Services, listed the divisions covered by Engineering/Operations & Public Services. Mayor Kaumo stated that the majority of the cuts were in this department, and Parks & Recreation. Cuts proposed for Parks & Recreation are at 18%. Parks & Recreation is an important component of the City to retain citizens. Quality of life is essential, so cuts cannot be made exclusively in Parks & Recreation.

Overtime caused due to the fair was cut, so that costs can be saved amounting to around \$6,000.

Councilor Halter asked about what the sales tax collection from Amazon totals. Mr. McBurnett stated that information disclosing each individual taxpayer is not provided. Councilor Halter expressed frustration at not being given the information when it is possible to be provided at the State level. Mr. McBurnett added that he would give information to the Governing Body regarding categories of business, including online retailers.

Mayor Kaumo asked what the first priority would be if funding were to be added back into the Engineering/Operations & Public Services budget. Mr. Kauchich stated that street maintenance would be the first priority after an accumulation of cuts over past years. Winter maintenance, street signs, conversion of streetlights to LED bulbs to save on power, and other areas were cut.

Mayor Kaumo stated that possible additional cuts would not be discussed this evening, as the budget committee has reviewed these and has cut as many areas as possible.

Councilor Halter asked whether Mr. Kauchich has considered participating in Rocky Mountain Power's Blue Sky energy program. Mr. Kauchich stated that the City has participated in the WattSmart program that Rocky Mountain Power offers, and quite a bit of money has been saved. Many facilities have been upgraded using this program. Councilor Halter added that the BlueSky Program is more in line with buildings, installing solar power on any building with a flat roof. Councilor Bettolo asked about stoplights that could be eliminated, and whether a study would need to be done in order to do that. Mr. Kauchich stated that a study is required to eliminate a stop light and he does not see many opportunities available.

#### Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation ended up with cuts between 11 – 17%. Eliminating Washington Park Pool was discussed, but the Mayor's budget was reduced in order to keep the pool open for the younger citizens. Discussion took place regarding the outdoor pools. Departments would need to cut staffing to meet 20-25% cuts requested. Councilor West stated that almost all of the positions cut in Parks & Recreation were seasonal. Councilor Hickerson asked about privatizing the golf course using a management company. Dave Lansang, Parks & Recreation Director, stated that he researched management companies and he feels that the type of facility we have right now would be jeopardized, along with the risk of deciding that the management company does not work out and having to fix the problem after 5 years of neglect. Mr.

Lansang has been following other communities who have utilized a management company, and he has seen the courses deteriorate. The size of our community indicates that caring for the course ourselves would be the preferred method. Cuts from the golf course would result in lost staff, and therefore, lost revenue. Councilor Halter asked whether building maintenance for the Parks & Recreation buildings fall under Engineering or Parks. Mr. Lansang stated that Parks & Recreation handles its own building maintenance. Councilor Halter asked that Mr. Lansang look into the BlueSky Program for the Family Recreation Center since it has a flat roof and the power bill is incredibly high there. Mayor Kaumo asked if additional funding were put into the Parks & Recreation budget, where would priorities lie. Mr. Lansang stated that four full time positions have been lost in the last 5 years, so personnel would be the main priority. Low cost, unbenefited part time people the majority of the work to keep the functions of the Parks & Recreation department running. Mr. Lansang summarized the positions that have been lost over the years.

Councilor West stated that at this point, general questions might work well. Mayor Kaumo stated that cuts are being made where they can. Some departments do not have anything to cut. Not many employees took advantage of the early retirement incentive, and Mayor Kaumo encouraged the City Council to consider extending the early retirement incentive to the end of the year to see if more employees take advantage of it.

Cuts to personnel were discussed for the Police Department. Councilor West stated that combined communications is included in the police amount. If additional funding was awarded, Dwane Pacheco, Police Chief would ask for two additional police officers.

Personnel was discussed for the Fire Department. A Request for a vehicle was submitted.

If additional funding was awarded for the Finance Department, Mr. McBurnett would like to see additional funds placed into reserves as well as go towards additional staff for the building maintenance division, as Finance oversees aging buildings.

Mayor Kaumo stated that the budget changes almost daily so keep that in mind when reviewing the budget. The general fund requests are approximately \$2 million less than last year, which is roughly a 6% decrease. Different budget cut scenarios were discussed for departments to sit at 20%, 25% and 30% to see where the line is drawn to cutting full time staff or services provided for citizens.

Our goal as City leaders is not necessarily to save money. The goal of the Governing Body is to manage the City in a prudent manner while maintaining operating reserves as required and providing the services and quality of life that citizens expect.

Councilor West stated that the budget process is very complex. The flat budgets indicate that things are very tight; hours were spent trying to come up with cuts. Without CARES Act funding, a budget deficit exists at \$4.9 million. With it being a stressful time, Councilor West appreciates the departments' cooperation and wishes the situation was different. Mayor Kaumo echoed those comments and showed that with the base budget coming in, department heads still managed to cut between 20-25%. Some departments tightened up and reduced projections, so the concern is whether there will be enough money to get through the fiscal year.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Council President

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor