

## **Council disagrees on money budgeted for new pool weight room**

**By Anthony Welch**

The Manitou Pool was the topic of a heated discussion during the Manitou City Council's regular meeting Tuesday night.

The subject came up as Council was looking to approve the first reading of the amended mid-year 2011 budget.

Funding for a new weight room had been budgeted in 2010 as part of the Capital Improvements Fund. Somehow, that amount had vanished from the 2011 budget and it was being added back in. The amount increased the budget line for pool improvements from \$14,000 to \$68,106.

The weight room project had stalled when contractors informed the City that the proposed area didn't meet flood plain requirements. However, approval of a flood plain variance by Council would allow the project to continue.

Council members said they didn't want to get into a discussion about it, as their meeting had already extended late, however, dive into the matter they did.

Councilman Michael Gerbig, Councilman Rick Barry and Councilwoman Aimee Cox had reservations about approving the budget with the pool money appropriation. Gerbig questioned just how the City made any money from the pool, when many hours at the pool were dedicated to various swim teams and such.

Gerbig suggested the City look into what other pools charge. He also wanted to explore where people are working at the pool and what their hours were.

"I think we've been giving away the farm. We've given away our facilities," Gerbig said. "We charge citizens \$25 an hour, but we've given away the pool for \$15 an hour for another organization to make money."

Mayor. Marc Snyder reminded council a decision had to be made, as it was about to approve budget amendments. Like it or not, the pool was the City's responsibility.

"The fact is we have a pool and have to deal with it," he said.

Cox was reluctant to approve money for a weight room and thought it should be spent on improving energy efficiency at the pool instead. She concurred with Gerbig that Council should look into rates rental being charged at the pool.

"(The pool) is like a used car we continue to invest in and invest in," she said.

Barry said he's not "anti-pool," but wanted to see a business plan and know that the \$100,000 appropriated for the new addition was going to pay off.

"Show me where it's going to make money for the City," he said. "If this is an economically-viable addition to the pool, then I won't oppose it."

City Administrator Jack Benson offered up his two cents, saying he thinks questions brought up on operation matters at the pool need to be addressed. Benson said it's known that swimming pools aren't the greatest money makers.

"The issue is pools are losers. They're 100 percent losers," he said. "It's a question of what's the amenities you want to support for your community."

Benson said he saw great potential with the space planned for the proposed project. It could benefit the City, with the right business plan, he said.

A motion by Barry to approve the amended budget without the pool money failed with Snyder, Gerbig, Coreen Toll and Matt Carpenter voting against it. A second motion to approve the amended budget with the pool appropriations passed with Barry and Cox dissenting.

## **In other business, Council...**

- Approved a resolution celebrating diversity, equality and respect for all people. The resolution was the brainchild of Gerbig, who was assisted by Cox, to show Manitou supports the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.
- Approved a contract for Nolte NV5 Phase 5B, which includes the design of a T intersection at Park Avenue and Manitou Avenue. Original plans called for a roundabout, but based on troubles with the City's current roundabout, a T intersection was designed. The contract is for \$119,267.
- Approved a resolution authorizing the mayor to sign an agreement with the Colorado Department of Transportation for the El Paso Student Connector project. The project is funded by the Safe Routes to School grant the city received last year. The project will include new crosswalks and a sidewalk up El Monte Street.
- Appointed Carpenter as mayor pro tem. Cox resigned from the position since she was named Colorado Springs City Council liaison. Cox added that she will not seek another term on Manitou City Council.

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