

## **Council OKs funds for Rainbow Falls**

**By Jeanne Davant**

Manitou Springs City Council on Tuesday agreed to spend \$5,000 to help complete a master plan for Rainbow Falls.

El Paso County Director of Community Services Tim Wolken said completion of the master plan was a prerequisite for obtaining grants. He will ask the county commissioners for the rest of the financing for the master plan, which will cost an estimated \$10,000 to \$12,000.

The county will contract with Thomas & Thomas, a planning, design and landscape architecture firm, to complete the plan. Wolken said he expected the county leadership to support the project.

Manitou Planning Director Dan Folke said Manitou's appropriation for the master plan would come from the Conservation Trust and Open Space funds, pending approval from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board.

Mayor Pro Tern Aimee Cox, who presided over Tuesday's Council meeting, said the city of Colorado Springs had removed 4,500 feet of graffiti at the falls, a service that would have cost thousands of dollars if the city had to pay for it.

Manitou residents L'aura Montgomery, Lane Williams and Doug Edmondson have spearheaded an effort to clean up Rainbow Falls and transform the graffiti-covered area into the peaceful, natural place it once was.

They formed Manitou Environmental Citizens Action (MECA) to remove the graffiti but ran into a roadblock in the form of a privately owned parcel of land. MECA and Wolken convinced the owners to transfer the land to the county, clearing the way for a renovation project.

"After a decade of neglect, a clean-up is required," Wolken said Tuesday. "We look forward to putting up interpretive signage telling people about the history of Rainbow Falls. It's really quite a unique place."

Montgomery said MECA sponsored a cleanup day June 5.

"We had well over 100 volunteers," she said. "We painted the bridge as high as we could reach. It was quite a community effort."

## **Energy savings discussed**

Council also reviewed a package of projects that could save the city thousands of dollars in energy costs over the next decade.

The city's energy services contractor, Ennovate, proposed a list of improvements after conducting an energy audit that was completed in December.

The company guarantees an estimated level of savings that would be realized by each project! The city could also see operational and maintenance savings and rebates.

Once a contract is signed, Ennovate will solicit bids for individual projects, choose the best contractors and help the city find optimal financing for the jobs.

Council on Tuesday selected a package of projects to be included in the contract with Ennovate, at an estimated cost of \$438,279. Those projects include a high-efficiency furnace, insulation and a lighting retrofit with sensors that turn off lights when not in use for City Hall; installation of a bathroom fan and ventilation improvements at the library; heating, lighting and

airflow improvements at the pool; and some improvements at other city facilities, including public works buildings.

If all of the proposed projects were completed, annual energy cost savings could amount to more than \$32,000.

The contract will not include more extensive proposed improvements at the Aquatic Center.

Although the pool consumes about 70 percent of the city's energy costs, Council members said they preferred to focus on improvements to City Hall and spread the energy projects throughout the city's facilities.

"We've spent \$325,000 on the pool," Councilman Michael Gerbig said, "and we're talking about not being able to add a (police officer). I'd like to have a conversation about where we'd like to see the pool go before we spend any more money on it."

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

- Approved on second reading an ordinance regarding litter and weed control that updates definitions of litter and weeds in the City Code. The ordinance makes residents responsible for depositing litter in appropriate containers and controlling weeds designated as noxious by the county or state, as well as mowing grass higher than 9 inches.

- Adopted a resolution in support of a Town Hall Meeting and potluck on Nov. 7 at Venue 515. The meeting will be a community conversation on the future of Manitou and will address questions such as what elements make Manitou unique and what we want to be and become as a community.

- Heard a report from Finance Director Mike Leslie, who said that sales tax collections in May were "a little disappointing." While sales tax revenues were down 7.7 percent from May of last year, for the year to date they are running 6.4 percent ahead of last year.

- Appointed Benjamin Kingsley to the Open Space Advisory Committee.

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