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## **MSForward pool addition discussed at budget work session**

**By Anthony Welch**

Questions loomed over money budgeted for Manitou Springs Forward at the Manitou Springs City Council's work session Tuesday night, where Council reviewed mid-year 2011 budget amendments.

Council originally budgeted \$10,000 for the community initiative, which formed with goal of creating a new vision plan for the city. Recently, MSForward requested an additional \$3,500, citing the need for more money to put together a survey.

Mayor Marc Snyder said there was a great deal of good faith involved in the original decision to allocate the \$10,000, however he thought MSForward's included implementation of the final product. Evidently, that no longer seemed the case.

Councilwoman Aimee Cox said she's gathered from reports that, thus far, the vision isn't that much different from the original Rainbow Vision Plan. She also said she didn't feel a survey was necessary. Cox added if Council was going to approve additional money for the initiative, it should go to the planning department, so staff could come up with more specifics and policies under the plan's vision areas.

"Our only concern is we need a useful plan at the end," City Administrator Jack Benson said. "I'm squirming here a little bit when we're talking about how they should spend their money."

Finance Director Mike Leslie informed Council and Benson that the group had only spent around \$1,100 thus far. Councilwoman Coreen Toll questioned what the remainder of the \$10,000 was for. Councilman Michael Gerbig added that the \$3,500 could go towards the mini-grant program, which no longer has funds.

Benson reminded Council that to have someone come up with a comprehensive plan, it usually costs anywhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

"We all recognize we have an opportunity to get something for significantly less," Snyder said. "I'm not sure if I have enough information to approve the additional \$3,500 request."

Toll suggested that, since the goal of the group is to have the final vision document next spring, Council could hold off on approving the \$3,500 until the 2012 budget. Councilman Rick Barry said Council shouldn't be so quick to micromanage the group.

"What I struggle with at times is the process itself," he said. "I have to have faith with someone else's process."

Planning Director Dan Folke recommended that the City draw up a professional services contract with the group that would include the group's budget and scope. For now, the \$3,500 would be taken off the budget, Snyder said. However, Council could add it back on when it approves the final amendments on Aug. 16.

## **City wages up to par?**

The topic of City employees' pay rates came up, as Benson mentioned to Council he was asked by the pool director to replace an employee who recently resigned. The position he has to fill, assistant pool supervisor, currently comes with a salary of \$12.82 an hour. Benson said he had researched what other city's paid similar jobs and found that the salary needed to be closer to \$ 17 an hour. He added he was still looking into what all the position entailed.

Cox felt it crazy to pay that position that much, when that salary is nearly what the City's librarian and a number of police officers are paid.

"I'd be willing to up a little bit, but not as much as a police officer," she said.

Benson said as Council moves forward in the future, it will have to look at keeping salaries competitive, in

order to get quality employees and not lose out to bigger cities like Colorado Springs. In regards to the pool position, Benson said he was having a hard time with the salary issue.

"How do fix one person without poking everyone else in the eye? That's what I'm struggling with," he said.

## **Swimming pool addition**

When reviewing the capital improvements portion of the budget, Councilman Matt Carpenter said he didn't remember Council approving taking out the budget item for a weight room addition at the swimming pool. He wanted to know if the project was going to happen or not.

Folke said the project has been stalled because the City can't get flood plain approval for the proposed area. However, the City could apply for a flood plain variance. It would take hiring an engineer, and specific criteria would have to be met.

Leslie mentioned funds were appropriated for the project in 2010. Snyder added that he was told \$30,000 was fronted to the contractor for the project.

"We've got a contractor sitting on \$30,000 of our money," Benson said. "We need to move forward on this project."

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