

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Finance Committee of the City of Norfolk, Nebraska met in the City's Conference Room, 309 Madison Avenue, Norfolk, Nebraska, on Monday, June 27, 2005, beginning at 7:00 a.m.

Mayor Gordon D. Adams called the meeting to order.

Roll call found the following Committee members present: Mayor Gordon Adams and Councilpersons Brenneman, Fauss, Lange (7:21 a.m.), Leshovsky, Saunders, and Wisnieski. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman and Van Dyke.

Staff members present were City Administrator Mike Nolan, Public Works Director Dennis Smith, City Attorney Clint Schukei, City Clerk Beth Deck, Parks Superintendent Pat Mrsny, and Human Resources Officer Sheila Schukei.

The media was represented by Brian Masters, US92; Jim Curry, WJAG/KEXL; and Greg Wees, Norfolk Daily News.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Norfolk Daily News, and notice of the meeting was given to the Mayor and all members of the Council prior to the meeting.

The Mayor presided and the City Clerk recorded the proceedings.

The only item on the agenda was a discussion regarding Research Associates completing a public opinion poll related to a proposed **water park**.

Doug Evans and Barb Derrick of Research Associates participated in the meeting by telephone conference call.

City Administrator Mike Nolan distributed a request from Jeff Bellar, Norfolk Catholic Schools, regarding improvements to Memorial Field. A group of individuals from the three area high schools (Norfolk Catholic, Norfolk Public Schools and Northeast Lutheran High) and City representatives met several times in the past couple of years to discuss the possibility of the installation of field turf on Memorial Field's football field. Bellar's letter, dated June 23, 2005, states there is more demand for the field than what it currently can physically handle. This is despite considerable efforts used to keep the field in the best shape possible. School representatives and City staff feel, although field turf is expensive, it would allow for greater utilization of the facility and also reduce maintenance costs, e.g. mowing, watering and related activities. With the installation of field turf, more football games could be played and Memorial Field could also be available for soccer and other activities. The group suggests adding a question to the public opinion poll regarding the installation of field turf at Memorial Field.

City Administrator Mike Nolan will fax the June 23, 2005 letter from Norfolk Catholic Schools to Doug Evans. Nolan stated the estimated cost for field turf is \$700,000 to \$750,000. Field turf has a 10-12 year guarantee; however, it functions pretty effective for 15-20 years. The group feels gate fees will help amortize the cost of the turf. The group figures traffic without the turf is approximately 35,000 people annually. Gate fees will probably increase \$1.00 per ticket to help defray the cost of the turf. Nolan stated Bellar also proposes soliciting community subscriptions from businesses and industries to make the project cost-effective.

Councilman Fauss feels elected officials and City staff should meet with Bellar, as well as area high school coaches, to further discuss the proposal. Fauss feels including a question on the community survey regarding the field turf is a good idea. Councilman Fauss asked how much money the City will save by installing field turf.

Parks Superintendent Pat Mrsny explained the City of Norfolk currently spends approximately \$30,000 annually for labor and maintenance at Memorial Field. Mrsny stated, however, the City would probably not save \$30,000 per year but with the installation of field turf more revenue would be generated.

Councilman Wisnieski questioned the main upkeep on field turf.

Mrsny stated the main upkeep is keeping the turf clean and groomed.

Doug Evans, Research Associates, stated the City of Lincoln installed field turf and the cost was closer to \$1 million. Lincoln did go with a specific brand name which was more expensive turf. However, the more expensive turf significantly decreased the number and severity of injuries related to unnatural turf. Evans feels the increased cost was worth the dramatic reduction in turf injuries.

Mayor Adams wondered whether field turf is asphalt based. Adams has concerns with drainage on such a flat surface as Memorial Field.

Public Works Director Dennis Smith doesn't know whether the base is asphalt or rock. However, the key to good field turf is drainage.

Councilman Wisnieski moved, seconded by Councilman Fauss to include a question on the survey regarding the installation of field turf at Memorial Field. Roll call: Ayes: Brenneman, Fauss, Leshovsky, Saunders, Wisnieski and Mayor. Nays: None. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman, Lange and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Mayor Adams questioned whether elected officials are in agreement to go ahead with the water park survey.

Councilwoman Saunders feels elected officials need public input on the issue.

Mayor Adams asked whether the questions on the survey regarding water park features are necessary.

Nolan stated assumptions are that, based on feedback from Hastings and other communities with water parks, the public wants the various features included in a water park. The water park committee wants to design something with public support. However, each of the features has a component cost. One of the options is a wave pool which is included in the cost estimate because public comments received showed strong support for that feature.

Nancy Ronto, Burbach Aquatics, stated one item included in the estimated cost of the project but not included in the survey is a separate spray park to be located in Central Park.

Mayor Adams feels an indoor swimming pool is not necessary at a water park. Adams feels the cost would be significantly higher for an indoor swimming pool and the YMCA already has a good pool.

Ronto stated the cost of an indoor swimming pool is not included in the cost estimate and would add significant cost to the project.

Councilwoman Saunders moved, seconded by Councilman Leshovsky to eliminate the indoor swimming pool option from the survey and to add a spray park at Central Park option to the survey. Roll call: Ayes: Brenneman, Fauss, Leshovsky, Saunders, Wisnieski and Mayor. Nays: None. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman, Lange and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Councilwoman Saunders questioned how successful Research Associates is on surveys of this type, especially since it contains 27 questions.

Doug Evans stated success depends on how important the issue is to people. On these types of questions, Research Associates has been very successful. Many people "jump at the opportunity to be involved in any sort of community decision".

Tim Brunswick, Swimming Pool Committee member, felt question No. 15, "Would you pay 'X' amount of dollars for a single admission to a new water park", on the survey should include a seasonal pass option.

Ronto also feels question No. 15 should contain price brackets that people are willing to pay to establish a threshold instead of asking a "yes/no" question.

Evans stated the question can be re-written but it does add length the survey.

Barb Derrick, Research Associates, questioned what the three choices should be for single admission tickets as well as the cost of a season pass.

Ronto suggested adult admission options of \$3.50, \$4.00 or \$5.00 and children admission options of \$2.50, \$3.00 and either \$3.50 or \$4.00. Ronto will provide the season pass information to Research Associates today to include in the survey.

Councilman Wisnieski feels citizens will want to know what existing water parks are charging for admission.

Nolan feels Wisnieski's idea is good and the survey should include information on what Grand Island's water park is charging for admission.

Evans said it may be worth while to include an estimated dollar amount of new business and/or sales tax revenue projected to be generated by a water park.

Ronto stated water parks are considered economic development projects and bring in revenue to support the facility. However, economic development growth varies from community to community depending on how much and the type of retail located in the community.

Councilman Wisnieski questioned whether the public needs to know the proposed locations of the water park or whether the location is a committee decision.

Ronto feels a question should be added to the survey regarding where the public would like to see the facility placed. Ronto stated the sites under consideration are 1st & Benjamin, south of Walmart and West Highway 275. Approximately 10 acres is necessary for a water park.

Wisnieski questioned whether Skyview Park would be an option for a water park. Wisnieski feels people would have more to do if the water park is located at Skyview Park.

Nolan feels the neighborhood would not be in favor of locating a water park in Skyview Park because of the additional noise created. Nolan stated the demographics section of the survey would provide information as to how Ward 2 residents feel about locating a water park in Skyview Park.

Tim Brunswick stated traffic flow would be difficult in Skyview Park.

Ronto stated the water park facility should be constructed to handle up to 2,000 vehicles daily.

Councilman Fauss feels people with million dollar homes probably won't appreciate a water park in their neighborhood.

Mrsny stated the dirt road in Skyview Park would need to be enlarged and paved if a water park is located there.

Ronto stated elected officials have the opportunity to find out how Ward 2 residents feel about the option by adding it to the survey.

Councilman Wisnieski moved, seconded by Fauss to add Skyview Park to the survey as an option for location of a water park. Roll call: Ayes: Councilpersons Fauss, Lange, Leshovsky, Saunders and Wisnieski. Nays: Brenneman and Mayor. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Councilman Fauss asked why question No. 19, "If you knew that even without a water park, property taxes are likely to increase \$45 on a \$100,000 house due to flat sales tax revenues" is included on the survey.

Barb Derrick obtained the information from Dennis Smith.

Nolan stated the City will need an increase in the bond fund due to additional projects, including an ethanol facility. Also, sales tax revenue has been flat for the City of Norfolk.

Smith explained the City had a \$30,000 decrease in March sales tax receipts and a \$40,000+ decrease in April sales tax receipts.

Councilman Fauss is opposed to raising property taxes to offset sales tax receipts. Fauss feels citizens "turn negative immediately" when raising property taxes becomes an issue.

Nolan explained the only other source to make up the difference is property taxes, as well as cuts in spending.

Evans stated question No. 19 could come out of the survey since it is a separate issue from the water park.

Councilman Brenneman feels question No. 19 should be deleted from the survey.

Councilman Brenneman moved, seconded by Councilman Fauss to delete question No. 19, "If you knew that even without a water park, property taxes are likely to increase \$45 on a \$100,000 house due to flat sales tax revenues" from the survey. Roll call: Ayes: Brenneman, Fauss, Lange, Leshovsky, Saunders, Wisnieski, and Mayor. Nays: None. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Councilwoman Saunders left the meeting at 7:45 a.m.

Ronto questioned whether the survey could be changed to "diving boards" and not "high dive" due to liability issues. Ronto stated swim competitors use high dives for practicing but not in competition.

General consensus of elected officials is to change the wording from high dive to diving boards in the survey.

Jim Curry, WJAG/KEXL, questioned how many people will be surveyed.

Doug Evans stated a total of 450 completed surveys will be taken to include 300 people within the city limits and 150 people outside the city limits.

Councilman Brenneman feels the survey should include information about the viability of the existing pools. Brenneman stated the City has two existing pools that are marginal at best. Brenneman would like a question designed to reflect the replacement cost and/or maintenance cost of the existing pools.

Sheila Schukei feels Brenneman makes a good point. Citizens should know that renovating the two existing pools is estimated to cost \$5 million.

Smith suggested a new question No. 19 read, "Would you be more or less likely to support a bond issue for a new water park if you knew it was going to cost "X" dollars to renovate the existing pools." Smith will provide dollar amount to Evans.

General consensus of elected officials was to add a new question No. 19 as suggested by Smith.

Councilman Wisnieski moved, seconded by Councilman Lange to proceed with the water park survey with the corrections made. Roll call: Ayes: Brenneman, Fauss, Lange, Leshovsky, Wisnieski, and Mayor. Nays: None. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman, Saunders and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Councilman Fauss moved, seconded by Councilman Lange to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 a.m. Roll call: Ayes: Council members Brenneman, Fauss, Lange, Leshovsky, Wisnieski and Mayor Adams. Nays: None. Absent: Kaspar-Beckman, Saunders and Van Dyke. Motion carried.

Elizabeth A. Deck
City Clerk