

Opinion / Local

City Council

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Council can approve it for a certain amount or approve it open-ended and allow City Manager Warner to accept whatever the FAA grants.

Councilor Lowe moved to approve allowing Warner, Jr. to accept whatever grant offer the FAA presents with a second by Councilor Abell. Council voted unanimously in favor.

According to Owen this project will cost 1.7 million dollars overall and is entirely grant funded therefore, not using any City money to complete.

911 Contract Update
Warner, Jr. addressed Council advising an amendment had been made to the intergovernmental agreement with the 911 Dispatch center that would increase the number of board positions from three to nine.

The County Board of Commissioners passed that on the 3rd of August. The 911 board discussed it at their last meeting and felt five members was feasible.

He sent a letter to the Board of Commissioner in June outlining some concerns the City had with the 911 dispatch contract, which Warner claimed hadn't been reviewed in nearly 10 years. He proposed putting together a committee to look at the contract including the makeup of the Board. Warner's proposals also included the role of the board in decision-making, possible creation of an operations board that would oversee day to day operations and expenditure plans including funding.

Warner, Jr. advised that the Commissioners signed this changing the board but he felt maybe waiting for a comprehensive analysis of the overall contract would be better.

Councilor Downing voiced, "I may have a potential conflict here as I work for Dispatch."

Mosier advised that since there was not money involved, she did not feel that this was a true conflict for Downing but accepted his abstaining in the matter.

Lowe asked, "If we don't vote to accept what the County has already passed, we already have a motion to put forth a committee to review it, then come up with further recommendations. So no action achieves that purpose am I correct?"

Warner responded, "Yes. And if I don't sign this amendment the County has already signed then it basically goes away. I wouldn't mind having a motion from the Council directing me to push forming a five-member committee to look at comprehensive changes to the 911 contract."

Lowe added, "I am in strong favor of action of changing things and how they are working there so I will move to proceed with a committee to review and come up with recommen-

dations for the changes."

Thomas made a second. Council voted unanimously to approve minus Downing's vote.

Sam-O Swim Contract Update

Heidi Dalton accompanied by several YMCA board members, addressed Council beginning with a slide presentation. She noted the variety of services the YMCA offers.

An impressive variety of children's sports and adult work out classes like Yoga, strength training and Zumba, not to mention the Fitness Center. Dalton noted the community partners they have built strong relationships with, strengthening our community. However, the underlying reason for this presentation and singing of their accolades was very simple. Money. Specifically, money for Sam-O Swim center.

The City owns the building that houses the community swimming pool, paying utility costs such as electricity and natural gas. They also pay for chemicals for the pool. In recent Budget hearings the City agreed to take over outside maintenance of the building as well such as snow removal in the winter months and lawn care in the summer in an effort to help alleviate costs for the non-profit.

But simply put, the 1982 contract the YMCA has been operating under for nearly 40 years no longer is beneficial to the YMCA and if they continue to operate the pool they feel that a management fee is a necessity.

Dalton said in her pitch that the YMCA had set a goal to teach every second grade student to swim, they met that goal and are now expanding it to teach every second and third grade student. They donated nearly \$30,000 in scholarships so students who likely wouldn't, can go to college. She noted other scholarship programs that allowed low income families opportunities.

Dalton proudly spoke that the YMCA really focused on community improvement through programs offering youth development, social responsibility and healthy living.

She told council that money that was coming into other programs at the YMCA was being funneled in part to help fund overhead costs at Sam-O Swim because the amount of money the pool took in could not cover it. Raising the prices for something like open swim, which is currently \$3, was not an option Dalton felt. She said they prided themselves on never having to "turn anyone away" and feared a rate increase would have a negative effect.

There was a consensus among Council questioning why this matter was being brought to their attention now and not at Budget time. Dalton said it was a misunderstanding about the timing. Councilor Langrell questioned what that misunderstanding was. Dalton informed Council she had emailed Owen about this matter and had spoken with

former City Manager Mike Kee in May. She claims she thought people were talking and passing along information when that in fact did not seem to be the case.

Langrell responded by saying, "So the ball was dropped." The YMCA contract expired and they have been operating under an extension that expires at the end of August.

After nearly an hour-long discussion among Council that included making note that other City-owned properties such as the golf course were managed by outside entities yet did not receive from the City a management fee, Councilor Lowe made a motion to extend the YMCA contract for six months with a \$1 placeholder (management fee). Abell seconded the motion.

Before the final vote Mosier said that she wanted to see work done on resolving this matter long before the expiring of the six months. She stated she thought it was a good idea to look at business models with either the City, School District or some other outside entity managing the facility.

After that statement Council voted unanimously in favor. Dalton advised she would have to present this to the Y Board, who would make the determination of whether or not to accept the contract extension. Council spoke of the need to do some outreach to the community as well to get opinions on what they would like to see.

One of the ideas was to place a survey on the City website another was to contact the Sam-O Swim committee to try and get them to help with public outreach as well.

Comments

Owen spoke about the upcoming pool closure. Upgrades to the heating system were being made, the old boiler has already been removed in anticipation and with it being August is not needed to heat the building. Shower units are also being replaced. Work is progressing nicely on the water systems mountain line replacement.

Warner mentioned a trip to Portland attending a presentation about and the usage of Biomass in lieu of coal, which can't be used after 2020.

Langrell asked Warner if he had been to the watershed, and he had.

Langrell brought up the fact that for years they'd been discussing doing something about it.

Warner agreed more needed to happen to help thin and clean it up and anticipated meeting soon with the Forest Service and legislators.

Finance Director Jeanie Dexter stated the City was working at changing billing from bi-monthly to monthly. The transition is nearly complete. She also noted the City is now using a third-party for ambulance billing, yet has not seen a big increase in collected funds.

Julie Smith, City Recorder reminded everyone that applications to file for running for City Council are due in a matter of days.

— GUEST OPINION —

Combatting mental illness and drug abuse

By Rep. Greg Walden

Across Oregon, I've talked with many families who are struggling with mental illness and drug addiction. These touch every segment of our communities, no matter where you live or what you look like. Tragically, they often carry with them a major stigma in society, and help is hard to find. Fortunately, Congress is working in a bipartisan way to help solve these problems and offer relief to those who need help.

The size of the crisis is staggering. Nearly 10 million Americans have a serious mental illness, and yet 40 percent of them aren't receiving the treatment they need. In Oregon, more people are dying from drug overdoses than car accidents, with our state ranked consistently at the top for non-medical use of prescription pain relievers.

I've heard the heartbreaking personal stories from people who are most affected. At roundtables in Medford, Bend, and Hermiston, I spoke with parents whose children experienced homelessness, violence, and worse due to mental health issues or drug addiction. I've heard from law enforcement officials about how the default place for the mentally ill is often the local jail. Local physicians and caregivers told me how they severely lack the resources to effectively help patients suffering from addiction.

The good news is recently the U.S. House passed two key pieces of legislation: the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act and the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act to tackle this crisis head on.

The Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act focuses on improving drug abuse treatments, addressing the underlying causes of addiction and helping those most at risk. Our bill expands access to care and prevention services in our communities, and establishes best practices that will help prevent lawful prescription use from spiraling into abuse. It gives new tools to law enforcement and prevention advocates to combat the epidemic of painkillers and heroin.

Importantly, we're increasing first responders' access to the potentially life-saving anti-overdose drug naloxone. While some states, such as Oregon, have already broadened its availability, I believe the use of naloxone should be boosted around the country. With our bill, we can ensure better access to treatment, we can reduce the number of legally-proscribed pills that



Submitted Photo

Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central, and eastern Oregon.

shouldn't be out there and save lives.

Meanwhile, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act would be the first significant overhaul of the nation's mental health system since the Kennedy administration. Our bill reforms the 112 federal programs that address mental health, ensuring they effectively coordinate and streamlining the bureaucracy currently creating serious barriers to care. It allows families to better work with health care professionals to care for loved ones, and helps fix the shortage of 100,000 psychiatric hospital beds in this country. Our bill also advances tele-psychiatry to help mentally ill patients in rural and underserved areas.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, those patients with severe mental illness who do receive care are 15 times less likely to commit, or be the victim of, violent acts than those who go untreated. While the vast majority of people with mental illness are not violent, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act works to make sure that those who are struggling do not go on to harm themselves or others.

Both of these bills addressing mental health and opioid abuse have passed the House with overwhelmingly bipartisan support. I'm proud to say that the drug addiction plan has also been passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President. And I hope that the Senate will soon pass the mental health reform bill so that we can deliver help quickly to those who need it.

Mental health and drug addiction issues do not discriminate based on age or gender or where you live or what political party you belong to. They impact our neighbors, our friends, and our families in Oregon and across the nation. For the sake of our children, our safety, and our society, we must fix this broken system that allows those who are suffering from mental illness and drug addiction to fall through the cracks.

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