

COMMUNITY & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE

October 25, 2007

The Community & Neighborhood Services Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on October 25, 2007 at 8:06 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Mike Whalen, Acting Chairman
Scott Somers

COUNCIL PRESENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debra Dollar
Alfred Smith
Trisha Sorensen

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on the preservation of the locomotive in Pioneer Park.

Assistant Parks, Recreation and Commercial Facilities Director Mike Holste displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and advised that the 1912 steam locomotive located in Pioneer Park was in service until 1957, at which time the locomotive was donated to the City of Mesa. He stated that the locomotive is presently in serious disrepair due to rust, graffiti and vandalism, and he advised that the primary concern at this time is the leakage of asbestos.

Mr. Holste advised that the following alternatives were presented to the Parks and Recreation Board on September 13, 2007:

1. Restore and rehabilitate the locomotive in a phased approach at a cost estimated to be in the range of \$240,000 to \$260,000.

Scott Lindsay of Steam Operations Corporation, a consultant with experience in the restoration and preservation of locomotives, was retained to provide the cost estimate. Mr. Lindsay suggested that the City move the restored locomotive to a location close to Main Street for display as a historical exhibit.

2. Sale of the locomotive (two parties have expressed an interest).

In the past, two parties from California expressed an interest in purchasing the locomotive for approximately \$5,000, and the purchaser would incur the costs to transport and restore the locomotive.

3. Lease the locomotive to the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler, which would rehabilitate and restore the locomotive.

The museum would pay \$20,000 of the \$50,000 expense to move the locomotive to Chandler, and the City of Mesa would be required to contribute the remaining \$30,000.

Mr. Holste reported that the Parks and Recreation Board recommended the formation of a citizen's fundraising committee, which would have six months to raise the \$240,000 to \$260,000 required to fully restore the locomotive. He added that if the citizen's committee failed to raise these funds, the Board recommended that the City enter into a long-term lease with the Arizona Railway Museum and contribute \$30,000 to move the locomotive to Chandler. Mr. Holste said that if neither of these options were viable, the Board recommended that the City issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale of the locomotive. He noted that the Board also suggested that the citizen committee be requested to research another potential funding option, the public art component for the future expansion of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system. He advised that the cost to restore the locomotive would increase by approximately fifteen percent each year.

In response to questions from Committeemember Somers, Mr. Holste stated that the LRT public art funding could cover the entire cost to restore the locomotive. He added that asbestos abatement would have to occur during the next year, and he confirmed that the locomotive also has lead-based paint.

Development Services Director Christine Zielonka advised that the Environmental Programs Department has been monitoring the locomotive for the past thirteen years and that the primary problem is asbestos. She confirmed that currently there is no risk to the public health from the asbestos or the lead-based paint, and she reported that a fence has been constructed around the locomotive to prevent public access to the train.

Committeemember Somers expressed support for a private fund-raising effort to retain the locomotive in the City of Mesa. He stated the opinion that if there is insufficient public interest in preservation, the City should sell the locomotive. Committeemember Somers noted that he would not support utilizing City funds to move the locomotive to Chandler.

Transportation Director Jeff Martin advised that a public art component was included for each LRT station in the original twenty-mile route, and he anticipated that public art would be included as a part of future LRT expansion plans. He reported that a study is currently being conducted to determine the feasibility of extending the LRT system to Mesa Drive or beyond. Mr. Martin stated that a proposal regarding the extension is likely to be presented to the Council in the spring of 2009 and that a projected opening date for the extended route is 2014 or 2015. He added that public art funding could become available in approximately 2010 or 2011.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the cost to restore the locomotive could increase to approximately \$320,000 in 2011; and that \$320,000 in funding is likely to be available for the public art component of an extended LRT system.

Committeemember Somers reiterated his support for a citizen's fundraising committee, and he added that if the committee is unable to raise sufficient funds for the restoration, it may be able to raise the \$30,000 required to relocate the locomotive to the Arizona Railway Museum in Chandler.

In response to questions by Acting Chairman Whalen, Ms. Zielonka advised that staff recommends that the City act quickly to resolve the asbestos issue by soliciting bids on the project. She added that \$30,000 may be insufficient to address the cost.

Mr. Martin responded to questions from Acting Chairman Whalen by advising that a future extension of the LRT system to a logical terminus in the area of Mesa Drive would be fully funded by the region and the Federal government. He explained that Mesa Drive is not a logical terminus and therefore, the extension may end several blocks east of Mesa Drive. Mr. Martin confirmed that the end of the line location would include a transit center and a "park and ride" lot.

Acting Chairman Whalen expressed the opinion that the City could provide safe playground equipment in Pioneer Park as an alternative to restoring the locomotive and that the City could sell the locomotive rather than endorsing a private fund-raising effort. Noting that he and Committeemember Somers disagree on the actions to be taken, Acting Chairman Whalen stated that this agenda item would move forward to the Council without a Committee recommendation.

City Manager Christopher Brady explained that because asbestos poses a health and safety issue, the City is responsible for abating the asbestos. He suggested that the subject of the locomotive be addressed at a future Council Study Session.

Ms. Zielonka advised that the immediate need is to stabilize the asbestos. She said that staff could solicit firm bids from contractors to determine the cost to stabilize the asbestos and the cost for the asbestos abatement. Ms. Zielonka added that the City has an obligation to ensure that the asbestos is properly contained before moving the locomotive, and that the City would be required to incur that cost.

Acting Chairman Whalen requested that when the subject of the locomotive is brought forward to a Council Study Session, that staff provide information regarding the cost to abate the asbestos and the value of the locomotive to potential buyers.

Committeemember Somers suggested that in the short term, a citizen's committee could attempt to raise sufficient funds for the asbestos abatement and then have a longer period of time to raise funds for the restoration costs or the cost to transport the locomotive to Chandler.

Acting Chairman Whalen stated that the Committee has provided direction, and he thanked staff for the presentation.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Community & Neighborhood Services Committee meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Community & Neighborhood Services Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 25th day of October 2007. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

baa