

NEWS

Supervisors take next step for Nugget Project ballot question

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By Kirk Caraway

The Carson City Board of Supervisors this afternoon voted to form a committee whose job it will be to come up with the wording for a ballot question asking voters to approve of the Carson City Center Project, aka Nugget Project.

Because the previous plan for funding the project proved unworkable, the ballot question would ask voters to approve a quarter cent sales tax increase to fund it instead.

The previous plan included getting private financing, and the city paying it off with increased landfill fees but without the city taking on new debt. But, City Manager Larry Werner said once they started talking seriously to banks about this financing, that they weren't as receptive. Without a firm debt obligation, the city could not get the kind of low interest rates they can for a standard public works project funded with bonds.

This necessitated the need for a quarter cent sales tax increase, which requires voter approval. Werner pointed out this money could also be used to help fund the operations of the library, which would help ease the stress on the city's general fund.

Werner also cleared up questions about whether or not the project needed a parking garage. Werner said that as far as the Knowledge and Discovery Center and public plaza did not need the garage, that there was sufficient parking available. But, he and Nugget President Steve Neighbors pointed out that the lack of parking would hurt the casino.

Therefore, Neighbors said that the Hop and Mae Adams Foundation would donate \$5 million to the Carson City Library Foundation to build the parking garage separate from the rest of the project. He committed to starting work on the garage as soon as the project was fully approved, so as to minimize the impact on the Nugget's operations.

There was also discussion about the legality of the ballot question that a group of petitioners are attempting to collect enough signatures to get approval for the November election, and how confusing it might be to have both on the ballot at the same time.

Lori Bagwell, one of the group of citizens circulating the petition, said they would consider pulling their question if they could work with project supporters on crafting a ballot question that met the objectives of both sides.

Clerk-Recorder Alan Glover explained to the board the procedure for such a ballot question, and told them there is very little time to get this question done in time for the election.

All five supervisors voted in favor of the motion to create the committee.

We will have more on this subject tomorrow.