

It's official: Rawlins cutting jobs

By Nick DeMarino, Time staff writer

Published: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 8:38 AM MST

Tuesday night at the Rawlins City Council meeting, City Manger Steve Golnar said the city would be best served by 12.5 layoffs.

During the introduction of his "Reorganization and Reduction in Force Plan," Golnar discussed the 39.3 -percent drop in sales tax revenue, a drop he said lowered the expected revenue in the city's general fund by 27 percent.

He also expressed uncertainty regarding state funding and the effect of the upcoming census.

"If we continue with (things as they are now) we have a deficit of \$487,000 this year and \$1.427 million next year," he said.

Golnar said his office plans to propose additional fees and reductions in the future, changes that should bring the current deficit to \$353,000 this year and \$1.357 million next year.

"We'll continue to look at options (to amend the budget), but most of the options we're looking at implementing have more of a medium-term to long-term horizon," he said.

The reduction of three city hall positions, two fire department positions, four public works positions, one police position and two recreation department positions would bring the projected deficit this year to \$89,000 and \$702,000 next year, Golnar said.

"I think this puts us in a pretty good position to plan for the future and react to the challenges we face in our economic environment," he added.

Earlier in the meeting, during the citizen's participation portion, Rawlins resident Leigh Nation asked the Council to consider alternatives to balance the budget and prevent layoffs. She suggested canvassing city employees about reducing the work week from 40 hours to 35, the elimination of some paid holidays, a monetary contribution from city employees for healthcare and the modification of funding for institutions such as the recreation center and golf course, which currently cannot support themselves.

"By saving these jobs, people will have money, not be on unemployment and (be able to spend) money in the city, and all of that is more beneficial than a series of (layoffs)," she said.

Mayor Ken Klouda responded that he greatly appreciated the suggestions and that those options have been discussed on previous occasions.

"We'd had to make reduction and cuts in the budget and it's not been a pleasant process," he said. "I commend the staff for their innovative thinking as well as (your) suggestions."

The council, Klouda said, doesn't make decisions regarding personnel; that's the domain of the city manager.

Councilman Jim Wells further discussed Gov. Dave Freudenthal's proposed reductions in state funding for city and town governments and their likely effects on Rawlins' budget.

"(A large portion) of our general funds come from the state. ... (The Wyoming Association of Municipalities) has already talked to the Joint Appropriation Committee about dipping into its rainy day fund. If it's not raining right now, then when is it?" he said.

Klouda said the city would do its best to maintain services and citizens' quality of life.

"Yes, there's going to be changes in the level of services in Rawlins, but there's going to be changes in services for every other city in Wyoming," he said.

No action was required by the council after Golnar's presentation, although Klouda directed him to submit a budget amendment following the implementation of the plan.

During an interview before the meeting, Golnar said the layoffs will likely be made before the next council meeting. He

said he plans to meet with department heads and the affected individuals in person.

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Correction

In Tuesday's article, "Rawlins may cut 21 positions," the number of positions to be cut was miscalculated. The city planned to cut 12.5 positions at the time.