

State advice draws local controversy

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BY: Kevin Bottrell, The Torrington Telegram

Despite a request from local contractors Ed Hawley, Adam Reed and Paul Reed, at their meeting Tuesday the city council awarded the contract for the Department of Corrections water treatment plant and elevated storage tank to Moltz Construction, Inc. of Cody, Wyo.

"We would like very much to do this job," Paul Reed said. "It's very important for our company to do this."

Hawley, who was the low bidder on the project, argued that the purpose of the prison was to create jobs locally both during and after construction.

"Why would you accept a higher price to take it out of town?" Hawley said.

Ted Bentley, a local banker, spoke on behalf of the local contractors.

"It's very important to keep these dollars in the community," Bentley said. "I think this is an excellent opportunity to give the nod to a local bidder."

City Engineer Bob Juve said that state engineering experts recommended Moltz as the more qualified contractor. Mark Maxwell, a representative of the Black and Veatch consultant firm, said Moltz was the best fit in terms of experience with building an integrated water treatment facility of this size. He said that although Hawley and Reed had done all of the work required for this project before, neither have worked on a project of this magnitude.

Councilman Randy Adams stated the council's concerns about getting the job done on time without problems, and reminded those present that Hawley had been awarded a large contract for the water and sewer lines to the prison. At the previous council meeting Hawley said the two projects were tied together.

The council voted unanimously to award the contract to Moltz for just over \$6.2 million.

In other business:

Mark Court and Jim Van Dorn from the Wyoming Rural Water Association appeared in opposition to the city's proposal to add fluoride to the water supply. Court said one way to look at the issue was to view fluoride as a prescription drug.

"As a licensed water operator, I do not feel I should be administering prescription medicine," Court said.

Court also characterized fluoride as a toxic additive, citing warning labels on fluoride toothpaste tubes that warn users to contact poison control if children swallow the toothpaste. Court also noted that residents would still ingest fluoride through the food chain from food animals in areas with naturally or artificially occurring fluoride.

"I think education needs to take place," Van Dorn said.

Court and Van Dorn also produced several studies and a short video produced by the Fluoride Action Network, an organization that is against the use of fluoride in water supplies. Torrington resident Paul Puebla also spoke, agreeing with Court and Van Dorn.

The council convened as a board of adjustment on several issues. Last month, Torrington resident Mike Burgess had requested a variance for a carport that came close to a neighbor's lot. Building Inspector Dennis Estes reported speaking to the neighbor, who had no objections. The variance was approved.

Tom Feeser requested a vacate and replat in the Stone Creek Subdivision. The request was to redefine an easement several feet to the north. No city utilities were in the affected area and the council approved the request.

Ken Doby requested a conditional use permit to turn a property on East 21st Avenue from a residential home into dedicated office space. The City Planning Board recommended the request 3-1. David Cronk, chairman of the planning board, who was the lone dissenting vote, spoke against the request, saying the city needed the housing space and office space was readily available.

"We need housing worse than we need office space," Cronk said.

The council voted unanimously to deny the request.

n The council approved several service agreements, including one with M.C. Schaff for the Torrington Downtown Street Project, which is a rehabilitation of the downtown area streets, mainly funded by the State Loan and Investment Board. The project has an estimated completion date in September. M.C. Schaff was also approved for the taxiway and apron improvements at the Torrington Airport.

The council approved an agreement with Camp Creek Engineering for the sewer line rehabilitation project, which also has a September completion date.

n The mayor and city council issued a proclamation, because of the dangers of chewing tobacco use and its prevalence among Wyoming youth, declaring the week of Feb. 17-23 as "Through with Chew Week," and Feb. 21 as the "Great American Spit Out." Both of these programs are national efforts to curb the use of chewing tobacco created in the 1980s by the American Academy of Otolaryngology.

n The ordinance changing the number of appointed positions in the city to seven was passed on third and final reading and the Tebbet road annexation was passed on second reading.