

BREAKING

John Day city councilor's low-cost pool proposal raises questions

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A yard sign urges voters to pass a revived pool bond measure. The \$4 million measure failed in an 802-802 tie in May and has been put back on the ballot for the November general election.

Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — What would area residents get if the scope and size of the pool proposal were changed from the \$6 million plan endorsed by the John Day City Council and John Day/Canyon City Parks and Recreation District board to a slimmer \$2 million plan?

The answer to that question could have a big impact on the Nov. 8 election.

The \$2 million proposal would use money the city already has on hand via an Oregon state lottery grant to build a pool facility in John Day, bypassing the need for a second vote on the \$4 million pool bond that failed in May.

The current plan endorsed by the council and the parks and rec board calls for a 6,600-square-foot facility complete with a family restroom, men's and women's locker rooms, a lobby, reception area, office space and a multipurpose room, as well as a wing to house plumbing, electrical and mechanical equipment.

There would also be a concrete apron to accommodate seating and a fence surrounding the entire pool area, and the design would allow for future expansion to enclose the pool for year-round use.

The \$2 million plan would cover a pool and the basic infrastructure to make it function, such as piping. None of the other amenities you would typically find at a public pool — including locker rooms, restrooms, fencing and some type of front desk for admission into the facility — were considered when discussing the \$2 million price point.

Both options include a six-lane, 25-yard swimming pool that would be adequate for holding swim meets like Gleason Pool did before it shut down. Neither option has a parking lot factored into the final price of the project.

City Councilor Heather Rookstool announced the alternate plan to the \$6 million pool proposal at the end of the Aug. 23 session of the John Day City Council. Rookstool said she had contacted Anderson Poolworks of Wilsonville, who relayed to her that they could build a pool at the \$2 million price point.

An individual with Anderson Poolworks (who did not want to be named due to fears it could jeopardize the company's efforts to secure the contract to build a pool in John Day) spoke with the newspaper about the \$2 million estimate given to Rookstool.

The individual from Anderson Poolworks stated that he was asked if his firm could build a six-lane, 25-yard pool. That individual responded that Anderson Poolworks could do that for the \$2 million price point presented to him.

Presumably, city and Parks & Rec officials would have to contact additional builders and contractors to complete any accompanying buildings were they to go with a scaled-down version of the plan with Anderson Poolworks as the pool builder. Anderson Poolworks did not offer a cost estimate for any additional facilities that might be needed to operate a public pool.

John Day Mayor Ron Lundbom noted that Rookstool has previously been on record as a supporter of the pool plan in its current form. She even signed a letter of support for the pool bond with the rest of John Day's city council before Aug. 9, when she cast the only vote against putting the \$4 million pool bond measure back on the ballot for the November election during a joint meeting with the parks and recreation board. Lundbom added that Rookstool never raised detailed concerns about the price of the project during the runup to the May 17 election, when the pool bond failed following a tie vote.

Lundbom also pointed out that the city has already spent a considerable amount of money in planning the current proposal that voters will decide on in November. Lundbom stated that the city has spent \$300,000 developing plans for the pool facility. Abandoning the current plan would likely lead to another round of planning and more money spent by the city hashing out those plans.

Rookstool said the change in her mindset regarding the current pool proposal stems from a July 28 JDCC Parks and Recreation board meeting in which she was singled out as needing to provide more support for the pool project and “get on the same page” as the rest of city council. Rookstool said she decided to do her own research following that meeting and came to the conclusion that a pool could be built for far less money than what is being proposed currently.

Another factor for Rookstool was one of representation. “The 50% who voted yes are being listened to by the six (John Day) council members. I believe we as a council need to listen to everyone, and someone should represent the 50% who voted no,” Rookstool said.

Lundbom said he thinks exploring the idea of Anderson building a \$2 million pool at this stage would be detrimental to the pool bond.

“My personal opinion,” he said, “is if we continue to explore this idea, we will be putting a nail in the coffin for the pool bond.”

Lundbom may be correct. The anonymous individual from Anderson Poolworks relayed a story about the city of Helix and its inability to decide on the scope and cost of a proposed community pool project. All the infighting and uncertainty surrounding the project led to Anderson declining to construct the pool.

The moral of that story, the individual said, is that residents of Helix couldn’t agree on anything and as a result have wound up with nothing.

John Day/Canyon City pool bond goes back to the voters

Supporters and opponents of the \$4 million pool bond that has reappeared on ballots for the Nov. 8 election both hope the second time is the charm.

Tags



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