

BECON 10/14/23

Happy Friday the 13th!

Guets:

Lynn Harper (Event project finance coordinator)

Karen (wife)

Mike Macone(sp?)

Steve Solberg

Melanie Schwartz

Tom Rupsis

Announcements:

-Steve Solberg brought a poster for the Medora Musical. It will be the Saturday after Christmas at the new Lockwood High School. Seating is limited so get tickets soon as it always sells out.

-Rene share that the Food Truck Battle ended up netting \$67,000 for funds to support Veterans. They are now currently taking apps for the granting process. Well done!

-Tanya Tweeten announced that the Halloween party for the club will be on October 27th at the Legion in the same room as breakfast. There will be a Halloween costume party with a Western theme. Check your email for more information that was sent out. There will be prizes.

-Dina Harmon -Rodeo tonight-this week; Ranch Rodeo closes tonight. The 13th-21st we will need 1 person and on the 14th and 21st we need two. 1-8pm. Also, the November events are on the site. For the Festival of Trees the club will be doing a Nutcracker themed tree in red, white, and blue. Donations are needed by the 28th of November. If you don't want to shop, give money and they will shop for you.

-Dress a Child Sign Up is still open - ½ is needed for volunteers. This will take place at the Walmart on the west end. Afterwards there will be breakfast.

Program:

Melanie Schwartz and Tom Rupsis came to discuss the Parks and Recs bond issue. This has been a 2 year process, with involvement from multiple committees. Tom mentioned that the presentation is the City's version and that the point of this version was to educate, not advocate. They adopted a strategy to update our City's parks, recs, trails, etc. When it comes to the Parks, Recreation & Public Safety, they focus on preventive measures when comes to public safety. That is what SEPTED is about- creating spaces that encourage safety. One example is the North Park Gazebo, which is now lit with lights to expose more of the gathering area. There are 16 locations they have identified to update if this bond passes. Tom said there are three things we need to understand:

1- We need to fix what we already have. Such as, the South Park pool. It is a historic landmark in Billings and our first public pool. It needs a lot of funds to update it and get it back to functional. Zimmerman park center is another example.

2. We need to finish things we started before. Such as Castle rock park, and Centennial Park West. They were started but not finished.

3. We also need to leverage funds that are not from new tax dollars. One example is the Trails projects. There are 6 around the City.

We currently have Federal grants in the amount of \$4.7 million. If we get a certain amount of matching dollars, they will have access to those federal funds immediately. This project is called the Stagecoach trail. Trail Net has committed to donate \$100,000 to this project. Cottonwood Park & Coulson Park were started but nothing was done. The land was set aside, but the projects weren't finished.

Community Centers:

The plan is to rebuild Northpark Center & Zimmerman centers, while building brand new ones at Centennial & Castlerock.

The largest portion of the bond issue is the Recreation Center which come in at a whopping \$110M of the total price tag. This building will include: 2 sheets of ice, 8 basketball courts for middle school/4 high school courts, a 50M Competition pool and a leisure pool. The total cost of the entire project comes to \$173.7M. After some fund raising and grants, \$143M is the total of bonded funds needed to complete this work. And of course, that involves your tax dollars.

Council's promise to the community is that they won't rob peter to pay paul on the line items in the project. So if the rec center goes over budget, they will have to fund raise to get the funds, rather than pull them from another project line item.

The tax dollars will be \$52.66 for every \$100,000 of value in a home.

Melanie Schwartz is handling the Capital Campaign and she is working on securing funding from the private sector-\$6M is what she is looking to raise. She is a little over halfway there. The other half of the funds are from businesses who will commit if the bond passes.

Stephanie Romsa asked if there was a possibility to remove the rec center from the project and just have the parks fixed as proposed, and the answer was no, that they didn't feel the 'energy' was there to support the parks project without the rec center. She also asked how kids from the lower socio-economic strata would afford the fees to utilize the rec center. The answer was that scholarships will be available for some of them. It doesn't get all of them entry.

Tom explained that there was a TBID. The Hotels pledged to charge a tourism district fee of \$2/night to put towards this project to subsidize it. It will cost approximately \$400-600k/year to run Rec Center, and no rec center has ever made money. They lose money almost always. Rob Romsa asked about Seniors on fixed income, with the realities of the world like rising gas prices, inflation, etc. How are they going to be able to handle these increased taxes. Tom Rupsis replied that his father in law is a senior, and said that 'he has always been on a fixed

income' essentially, and that it wouldn't be a big change. (However not everyone has been able to live on a strict budget to think this way).

Melanie made a point that its our turn to provide this to the community and this generation. Our parents did it for us. You are really building something for the next 40 years and hopefully another parks bond won't be needed of this magnitude.

The question was asked of how this project will affect the YMCA. Melanie said the Y is full and overflowing. She said it was believed there was enough demand for both.

Don't forget to use your vote as your ballots arrive.