

The Pueblo Chieftain

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February 27, 2008

Council delays police building pact

By Jeff Tucker

The Pueblo City Council delayed its decision on the third phase of the design contract for the new police department headquarters Monday after staff asked that the item be removed from the agenda.

The contract with Durrant Architects was up for approval after a second opinion by Kenny Davis Architects suggested the work was sound and the \$32 million cost estimate was fairly accurate.

City Manager David Galli asked council to remove the item because staff still needs to secure a few more documents for the contract and there was some question about who from Durrant will be working on the project.

Bill Baker, Durrant vice president, told council he will be personally involved in the rest of the design of the building but he isn't named in the contract.

Galli said that once staff works out those details the contract will be back before council.

However, council may have to call a special meeting to vote on it.

The next regular session isn't scheduled until March 24, because council will be at the National League of Cities and Towns during the second week in March.

The irony behind the Pueblo CrimeStoppers' biggest annual fundraiser was again a topic of discussion for council.

CrimeStoppers was applying for a revocable permit to hold the B Street Bash on the four Fridays in June this summer.

Ultimately the permit was approved, but Councilwoman Judy Weaver asked that the permits be removed from council's consent agenda.

The bash is arguably the biggest party of the summer and recently CrimeStoppers has been called to defend why a crime prevention organization would use a party that's widely associated with alcohol consumption as its primary fundraiser.

Weaver brought up those issues again, quoting from a Pueblo Chieftain article by a reporter who shadowed police officers during one bash night last summer and reported on complaints from local businesses about property damage and litter and stories from officers about underage drinking, fights and public urination during those nights, particularly after the bash has ended and patrons fan out into the Union District.

Weaver asked about those reports and also suggested that the Bash has grown too big for the CrimeStoppers to handle.

"I am in favor of stopping crime and fundraisers, but I'm very concerned about how we do this," Weaver said. "Are we really justifying what we're supposed to be doing here? We're raising a lot of funds, but as we're raising the funds these are the kinds of things are happening."

CrimeStoppers' executive board member Tom Bruss reminded council that the agency always provides free cab rides for people who get too inebriated at the Bash to drive home.

The Bash ends at 11 p.m., but the bars along Union Avenue stay open until 2 a.m. Because of that, Pueblo Police Chief Jim Billings said it was impossible to prove without question that the increased criminal activity in the area is a direct result of the Bash.

Finally, council will spend \$85,000 on a consultant to find out ways to make the Parks and Recreation Department more efficient.

There was some discussion among council members over whether it was worth paying so much money to hear what seems plain: that the parks department needs more employees to keep the parks maintained.

But Weaver and Councilwoman Vera Ortegon both said the money would be well spent by identifying the specific needs in the department and that the department itself would benefit from an outsider's perspective on its organization.

The contract passed on a 5-2 vote with Councilmen Michael Occhiato and Larry Atencio voting against it.