

City Council Special Meeting
Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2024

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey called the July 8, 2024, City Council Special Meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 1011 N. Coronado Drive, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Roll Call:

Mayor Clea McCaa II – present (telephonically)
Mayor Pro Tem Carolyn Umphrey – present
Council Member William Benning – present
Council Member Gregory Johnson – present
Council Member Angelica Landry – present
Council Member Marta Messmer – present
Council Member Mark Rodriguez – present

Others Present:

Victoria Yarbrough, Assistant City Manager
Chuck Potucek, City Manager
Chris Hiser, Police Chief
Laura Wilson, Leisure, Parks, and Library Services Director
Sharon Flissar, Public Works Director
Matt McLachlan, Community Development Director
Jill Adams, City Clerk
Nathan J. Williams, City Attorney
David Felix, Chief Financial Officer
Jennifer Dillaha, Budget Officer/Management Analyst II
Adam Curtis, Marketing and Communications Manager
Elizabeth Wrozek, PIO
Tony Boone, Economic Development Manager
Barbara Fleming, Human Resources Manager
Kennie Downing, Chief Procurement Officer
John Healey, Sports Coordinator

Pledge of Allegiance – Council Member Johnson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 1 Acceptance of the Agenda

Council Member Benning moved the Agenda for the Special City Council Meeting of July 8, 2024, be approved. Council Member Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Messmer, and Rodriguez voted in favor.

New Business

Item 2 Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Resolution 2024-046, Intent to Enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Castle and Cooke, LLC for the acquisition of real property known as the Pueblo Del Sol Country Club

Council Member Landry moved that Resolution 2024-046, intent to enter into a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Castle and Cooke, LLC for the acquisition of real property known as the Pueblo Del Sol Country Club, be approved. Council Member Benning seconded the motion.

Mr. Potucek apologized for the speed in which this is moving, but as he and Ms. Yarbrough go through the presentation, he believes that Council will have a better understanding as to why this is happening the way it is. He stated that last year Castle and Cooke announced that they would be leaving their operations in Sierra Vista and he, like probably many others, assumed that meant they were walking away from the Tribute Development which is true. However, Castle and Cooke is involved in three separate business entities in town to include Tribute, Pueblo del Sol Water Company, and the golf course operation. Late last fall, early winter, he encountered some developers that were interested in the land portion that had been working with Castle and Cooke. There has been some interest in the Tribute property from various investment groups since that time, but two concerns that they had, one was the status of the water company and what happens with the 100-year water adequacy certificate that the water company holds and then what would be the disposition of the golf course. They set out to find buyers for both of those entities. As the City did its research, it was found from the Arizona Department of Water Resources that the certificate of water adequacy would go with the sale to whoever purchased the water company, which is still an ongoing discussion, but that left the golf course. As time went on the developers, other investors, and folks had been looking for buyers for the golf course and certainly was not necessarily in the City's interest. Staff started doing due diligence on that because of the lack of buyers that were showing up for the property. In doing that due diligence, staff found that the golf course operation which includes the golf, facilities, restaurant, and bar operation, etcetera loses around \$30,000 a month which easily explains why nobody in the private sector was willing to take on the golf course. City staff looked at the operation and found that there are certainly some things that could be done better, and the hope remains that a private buyer would come in to do that, but that has not occurred. In May he spoke to the City Attorney Nathan Williams and Ms. Yarbrough to begin looking at negotiating a purchase and sale agreement with Castle and Cooke for the golf course as it became evident that no buyers would come forward. Also, during that time he got word that Castle and Cooke was prepared to leave the golf course operation. As time went on, that date became August 1st, which was very surprising to him that they would just up and leave an operation like that in such a fast amount of time. He asked for more time to look at this and do more due diligence, but they indicated that they would give the City until September 6th and in exchange for that they wanted the Council to move on the purchase and sale agreement prior to July 10th. Therefore, that is why the item is on the agenda and moving fast. Castle and Cooke, since I made the announcement that we were looking at this a couple weeks ago, has come out with a statement showing that they are indeed interested in moving off the property very quickly. In the meantime, staff has been working on how the City can operate this course if the Council does indeed decide to go ahead with this purchase and sale agreement. The City has been working with private management companies that to do that, that have far more experience in doing that. The City has found, but that will probably still take a few months, maybe until the start of next year to consummate that agreement. In the meantime, the City is working on operating the course during that time. Lastly, he stated that this has been a time-consuming process, and a lot of staff has been involved.

Ms. Yarbrough stated that she and the City Attorney, Mr. Williams, have spent about the past six weeks negotiating this agreement with Castle and Cooke and their attorneys. The financial terms are that the City would agree to forgive the outstanding sewer note of just over \$609,000. Although, the City would have to repay that amount to the sewer fund in exchange for ownership of the Pueblo del Sol Golf Course property and all assets and buildings. The sewer

note goes back to an annexation and development agreement that the City and Castle and Cooke signed in 1999, where the City agreed to build that sewer interceptor for future developments and sewer connection fees would then pay back that cost. Although, the terms of that development agreement were fulfilled several years ago, Castle and Cooke still owes the City for the construction of that line. The value in 2020 of the appraisal that Castle and Cooke shared with the City was \$1.6 million. The City will be updating that appraisal during the feasibility period.

There are three dates of importance in this agreement. The first is the agreement date which should Council approve it would be July 8, 2024; the feasibility expiration date that would be in 30 days, August 8, 2024, and the closing date, September 6, 2024. The feasibility period can be thought of as buying a house. The buyer and the seller come to terms of the price and then enter a period where inspections happen and go over the property. A lot of that has already happened. Castle and Cooke has shared their financials with the City going back several years and the City has done an initial inspection with a structural engineer and the property, and all facilities seem to be in relatively good shape.

The next three things that would occur would be an inspection of the wells, an updated appraisal, and a basic environmental assessment. All the exhibits would then be finalized, including the list of golf course property that would convey with the sale a list of all the current contracts, leases, and any other agreements and the assignment of those agreements or the assumption of them, the final bill of sale, and the list of advanced bookings and deposits.

As also with buying a house during that feasibility, should the City find something that the City then says, Castle and Cooke, we would like you to fix this and cannot come to an agreement, the City could back out of the sale. Also, in negotiating that feasibility, the City has included some provisions that would account for the 30-day referral period that generally applies to Council's actions.

Other terms in the purchase and sale agreement beyond mostly boilerplate that are of interest:

- City has requested that Pueblo del Sol end all memberships before the date of closing because they would become a public golf course and open to the public.
- Refund all outstanding memberships, ownership stakes, and gift certificates.
- Castle and Cooke would be required to continue to operate the golf course as is until the date of closing.

As the City works through the details of a potential contract with Paradigm Golf Group, City's staff would continue to operate the golf course as is and would plan to hire all current employees through a hiring agency while finalizing the management contract with Paradigm.

Under Arizona State procurement law, if a city advertises and receives competitive bids for services and includes cooperative language in its contract with successful bidder, another city may contract directly with that company without going through the bidding process itself. In the interests of time, since the City of Mesa competitively bid this golf course management service contract and selected Paradigm Golf Group to manage their Dobson Ranch property, the City would be able to negotiate with them directly for operations of the golf course. The way this agreement would likely work, Paradigm would be solely responsible for the operation, maintenance, and management of all facilities and the related expenses and costs of operating the facility. They would be responsible for all equipment, staff, and services, everything from landscaping, payroll, materials, utilities, media, and marketing. The city would be responsible for paying for major capital improvements. Paradigm would pay for capital improvements that

earned revenue that are not related to significant golf course maintenance. Some of the preliminary plans that they have shared include such things like upgrading the driving range to an electronic system like what you would see at a top golf type facility, upgraded music systems, and they would be responsible for paying that. The City would pay for major capital improvements and would negotiate payments from Paradigm to go into a facility improvement account. They would share in those costs along with the City and the City and Paradigm would then mutually agree on a facility improvement plan on an annual basis.

Mr. Potucek stated that he is aware of concerns with regards to water and water usage. The course has been in operation for several years and the water budget situation does not change. There are two wells on the course and as such that provides most of the water and needs for it. There is one well that probably needs to be dug a little deeper and during the hot months of the year they do need to purchase water from PBS Water Company to augment water supply until such time as the monsoons come and the weather is cooler. However, the wells are in pretty good shape. Overall, it does not change the water situation and if it is under the City, the City can work towards more water conservation efforts in the future with regards to the course.

One of the main issues is the urban setting of the golf course in Cochise County and there are very few golf courses left. One of them was Turquoise Valley which was a very nice course down in the Naco, Bisbee area, but the owners walked away from it and the desert reclaimed it rather quickly. Therefore, the location of the PDS golf course due to the housing developments all around it is a concern because of blight if the golf course were to go into a state of being inoperable. If this starts occurring then seen will be an increased cost with restarting up the operation as well as dealing with the maintenance issues that will inevitably crop up due to disuse, which is not a very good idea for anybody concerned. Economic development is a part of this as well due to the lack of golf courses in Cochise County. The City has been engaged not only in tourism efforts, but efforts to attract retirees, professionals like medical doctors, other companies, and sports tourism efforts. This is certainly a big part of that because people come to the City and expect to see facilities like that. It is not a good look for the City if it turns into blight in trying to attract business and development to the area.

Mr. Potucek stated that he does not know what will happen if the golf course is operating with anybody desiring to purchase the Tribute property. Also, in looking over the operation, financials, and dealing with Paradigm Golf Group, they are willing to absorb the operational losses that will occur, and they believe that they can turn the operation around in about four years and they are not expecting the City to subsidize those operational losses, a very important point for people to know. This makes Paradigm's model for managing and operating the golf course very favorable for the City. Finally, there are capital improvements that will need to be made. One of Council's Strategic Plan goals deals with a conference center in town, but most of the conference facilities in the community have either closed or curtailed their operations, leaving a very few places left for items like business conferences, weddings, and other large group meetings. The City had a structural engineer look at the building and it is in sound shape but would need to be remodeled to handle conference type situations. The City has some budget money set aside to begin that process and hopefully soon there will be an architect look at it to help do this if the Council decides to move forward. Other things that may need to be improved are things like the tennis courts that probably need resurfacing and could be redesigned to handle pickleball and Paradigm also seem to be fine with the pool operation as well. Overall, the City's letter of intent with Paradigm will hopefully be signed soon. Paradigm would also take over the operation of the restaurant and bar and hopefully improve that operation. In closing, he disclosed that he and his wife live in Winter Haven as well some staff and that was a concern in that it invites perception of a conflict of interest. Therefore, he asked

the City Attorney to investigate that and by Statute, he has determined that there is no conflict of interest.

James Pregler, a Winter Haven resident on the Board of Directors for the association, thanked Council Members Johnson and Messmer, who on Friday, July 5, 2024, attended the Winter Haven Board of Directors Study Session to explain the path that the City is taking to resolve the problem. He also thanked the City in advance for the pending positive vote for being proactive in responding so quickly to protect that viable asset and the homes in Winter Haven. For the record, he voiced concerns if the abandonment would happen, an immediate and catastrophic reduction of property values for all homes in Winter Haven as well as property surrounding the golf course and an eyesore for the City. For a lot of Winter Haven residents, their home is their retirement and most of their assets are tied up in their home. Many residents moved to Winter Haven for the golf experience that would disappear. He noted that an often-overlooked issue is a very high percentage of the residents have lost spouses and close friends and the golf course gives them some peace and solace. Being able to look out over their fence or sit on a bench overlooking the beautiful, well maintained green area is very soothing, relaxing, and cathartic. The golf course is important for both mental and physical health. With at least three fairways protruding into Winter Haven, there is always concern about security and unwanted persons trespassing onto the property. The current golf course staff and Winter Haven have worked very close to mitigate the security issue. Also, the Hummingbird Grill, with so few restaurants in the area, stands out as one of the better dining options with some changes like a good chef, better selection, more ambience, that could be an outstanding dining experience for the residents with limited mobility, which is an easy golf cart drive for them. Lastly, he stated that the residents look forward to working with any future management group to continuously ensure the security of Winter Haven and its residents and asked if someone from the Winter Haven Board may have a seat at the table with the City and management organization to aid and assist in furnishing oversight for the Winter Haven community.

Terry Diffey a resident on Foothills Drive stated that he does not have a lot to do with PDS and its area; however, over the time frame that the golf course was built along with everything else, there have been water problem rights for the last 30 years. He is concerned that next year the wells may be unusable. He noted that there is a golf course on Fort Huachuca that is open to the public. He also noted that a couple of weeks ago, Mayor McCaa made the comment that there was a shortage of funds for police officers in Sierra Vista and the golf course would be a budget deficit of \$30,000 a month. He urged Council to think about this because PDS is not the only section in Sierra Vista and noted that he resides adjacent to a drainage way that the City has not maintained in over 20 years. The people that live next to it are the ones that must go out and maintain it, cut the trees, mow the yards, etc. The City will make improvements to the golf course, but he has been around since the early 80s when the population was about 25,000 people and it is now roughly 50,000 people, and he wonders about that. The City claimed that the buses in town were going to be better than what they are now as well as the swimming pool after the indoor one was built, but it is a far cry from what the Council said was going to happen. Lastly, he stated that Council needs to back up and look at the desert landscape that everyone must deal with it and suggested that the people that live next to all of this get out there or they hire a company to maintain it because the City should not be in private business, which is what the PDS golf course and the restaurant will become because it will end up being owned by the City which will eventually start costing a fortune.

Joe Kraps stated that opportunity is knocking, the City has a chance to save a gem and although, some people are not in favor of the City being in the golf course business, but he understands what staff has done, who they are talking to, and the route that they are taking. He

added that when a business or a company comes looking at one's door, they do not come knocking at one's door first to know what the City is about if they are planning to relocate and bring jobs to Sierra Vista. They end up knowing more about the town than probably the residents because that is their job. If they are going to spend millions of dollars to relocate, they have a list of all kinds of things, i.e., schools, hospitals, police, fire, emergency medical, cost of housing, golf courses, city parks, etc. and they look at that list and check things to their pros and cons. They go down to the local coffee shop and talk to "John Q Public" to find out things and then they will come talk to Mr. McLachlan, Mr. Potucek, and Ms. Yarbrough, and sooner or later will come before Council with a rezoning, site plan, but they know the town and the things that they need for their future employees. He shared that he has been in town since 1979. He came to teach at Buena High School and was lucky enough to sit on the dais involved with the Planning and Zoning Commission for many years and the one thing that keeps driving him is how to grow Sierra Vista the right way. People say that they do not want to be Tucson, but that is never going to happen because Sierra Vista does not have thousands of acres of land available. Sierra Vista has Fort Huachuca on two sides, BLM, State land, and forest. Sierra Vista can only grow so big, but what can be grown is quality and jobs.

Kelly Burns a resident on Saint Andrews Drive stated that he has an interest in this discussion and shared that he moved to Sierra Vista three and a half years ago and it was disconcerting to hear that the City wants the golf course for a tax write off. Being in business, he knows that no business stays in business when people just write things off. Therefore, he knew that something had to change, and it was heartwarming to him to walk into Council Chambers before he heard any comments, just to hear the positive energy in the group, which made him feel much better because he did not know exactly what direction he was going to take. He commended the Council for their efforts in making sure that the public understood what was before them. It is a big job, and the City is not going to run the golf course because the City will hire a company that will do it which is standard practice, and they are not in the business of losing. They have done their due diligence to come and look at the property, the financials, and say that they can make a difference even if they absorb the losses for the next four years. In closing, he stated that this is a pride point for the City, to be able to step in and do this and hopefully it is something that the City can look at as a profit as well. He has concerns as well, but there is really no choice. The City did not ask for it, but it is an opportunity.

Rick Barr, a 26-year resident on Torino Way, stated that he is in favor of keeping the golf course, but the City needs to be sure that it is done the right way. He shared that his daughter is an executive with Troon Golf Management Company, and Troon is the largest management company for municipal golf courses in the United States. He also shared that the City of Tucson's courses were on the verge of going under ten years ago, but Troon came in and 10 years later, they have a great situation. Troon manages Safford and the Benson courses and recently took over a municipal course in Yuma. He voiced his concern in that the City wants to bypass the competitive bidding process and encouraged Council to do a quick request for proposals and give Troon a chance to provide a formal offer on what they can do because they, they have done a lot for the courses in Arizona. In closing he stated that he has worked for 20 years for the State of Arizona as a manager, and they were not allowed to do anything without a request for proposals. This is a big issue, and he would like to request that there be a competitive bidding process.

Randy Groth stated that everyone who spoke before him did a great job and noted that this is indeed a great community. The perception of what is going in the community is wonderful and there are several reasons why everything that everybody said is true, there is no finer place to live in, but there is a matter of perceptions that he would like for everyone to understand. The

perceptions if the City does not do this and the perceptions if the City does this. If a mall closes, people can go to other places and buy clothes and if a mall closes and the owner is still there, the cities can still force them to keep that grass cut and that parking lot clean. If a golf course closes, the grass starts to die, and it becomes a miserable looking place. Property values may drop a little along that golf course, but there is a bigger picture, the adversaries. The City only has one major employer. The City does not have \$4 billion, \$10 billion companies. The City has one, Fort Huachuca and Fort Huachuca is the lifeblood in every way, shape or form. They have a golf course, and it is great, Sierra Vista has a lot of people that are looking to retire over the next 10 and 15 years, and they are looking for communities of golf courses. This is going to be one that they are going to come to because of the weather, environment, and everything else. If the golf course closes, there will be somebody at the Pentagon that will wonder if it was a water problem as well as other offices. As the president of the Fort Huachuca 50 along with its 50 members and Council have worked to preserve Fort Huachuca and protect over the years. Good things are coming to Fort Huachuca and the City is not going to put up with the perception that there is no water because that battle has been fought for the last 30 years and they know how to balance that scale. They are not going to put up with the perception that \$30,000 a month is a lot because if a major mission at Fort Huachuca were to be lost, \$30,000 a month is nothing. There are new opportunities coming and the fight against the BRAC process has been for years and they are now in a catbird seat. Going down this road and purchasing the golf course, keeping this open, the perception is the City stepped in and took over in a situation that was needed in the community. They are showing that there is not a water problem and that they can solve the problem because this is an energetic, creative, and smart community. The City has so much going for it and will not have any of those other problems where missions may not come because of the perceptions of what is happening. In closing, he stated that he believes that in the next 10 years and 15 years, everyone is going to see the benefits pour out to everybody and it is going to help protect a major employer, Fort Huachuca.

Cynthia Means, Hereford resident, stated that she is a member of the club and is interested in it continuing to operate, noted that the Sierra Vista community is the nicest place that she has ever lived in, the quality of the community and residents are amazing, and she thinks that everyone has an interest in it continuing to be that way. She further stated that the club has been a godsend because she has made friends and signed up for the water aerobics classes and has started going to the dinners on Fridays. The people who work there are amazing and will hopefully be able to make application to become a part of the new management team. She voiced her concern over the pool because it is not large enough to have everybody come whenever they want to. It is a beautiful pool, and she would like for the ambiance to continue. Also, the pool aerobics are important for people in the community as well as the club and with better management, both will be able to make more money. Lastly, she stated that the gentleman who stated that he would like his daughter's company to be considered for management, in her experience with these things is that the lowest bid is not always the best option.

Jeff Jennings, resident on Sneed Drive, stated that the Facebook live by Council Member Rodriguez was very informative. He shared that he asked his wife many years ago before he retired from the Army that he wanted to come back to Fort Huachuca and live on the golf course; therefore, they bought their house, they love it, and it has become their sense of community. The community has a low crime rate, is affordable, beautiful year around surrounded by the mountains. He added that they chose it just like a lot of people did and as a retiree, his life revolves around the golf course because half the people present in Council Chambers are his good friends. Blight in the community could be detrimental. Lastly, he stated that one of the reasons that he retired in Sierra Vista is because he wanted to live on the golf

course, and he spends a lot of time over at the golf course. A lot of soldiers play there as well as on the post, but it is a draw to the City. He shared that he loves the City due to its beautiful weather, skies, birding, hiking, biking, and the golf course can make money. Lastly, he voiced his appreciation to Council and staff on the time and energy that has gone into this which will be good for the City's future.

Council Member Messmer stated that this is another difficult decision because for her, it is easy to say no because it is taxpayers' money being put into this and she wondered if this is the best use for that money, but it is hard not to say yes because it is important to save it. She shared that she talked to people to find somebody that wanted to say no, that this was a really bad decision because it would have been easy to go that way. However, every single person said that Council must do it and that it is the right thing to do. She voiced her appreciation to everyone who came out to the meeting and is supporting Council and noted that there are a lot of people pushing it down. Therefore, she hopes that not only today, but through the whole process that those individuals supporting Council make sure that this goes through and is a success.

Council Member Landry thanked everyone for being present and sharing their thoughts and concerns, as well as all those people watching online. She shared that Council received a lot of e-mail comments that Council read and appreciates and stated that there have been many discussions and a whole lot of research that has gone into this. She voiced her appreciation to staff for all the hard work on researching options and noted that there has been a lot of thought, effort, and time put into gathering information. She stated that it is not just a golf course, it is more and shared that she lives along the golf course. She further stated that she spoke to the City Attorney to make sure that she did not need to recuse herself, but he has stated that it is fine. She added that every day people are out early walking their dogs, walking in the evenings with their family, some are barefoot on the grass, which is great. There are people that are retired that golf every single day. They spend time with their family golfing, they take golf lessons, and it is a really great place to hang out, it is a way to still have independence when living along there, and it is a golf cart drive away to hang out with friends and to stay active. Therefore, she feels that this is very important. However, some people do not realize that they are always welcome to go there. There are a lot of different organizations that hold their meetings there, there are tournaments, which bring people from all over the place. Although, this is not the heart of the community, it is part of the pulse of the community, and although, this is not an ideal situation, it is much better than the alternative. It would be a detrimental to the community not to support this.

Council Member Benning thanked everyone that came out to the meeting and spoke. He noted that he thought that there would be more nays due to some of the messages that he received, which he understands, but the golf course does make money. The golf course did exactly what it was supposed to do, and it made Castle and Cooke money off the backs of hardworking Sierra Vista residents that moved to Sierra Vista for the ambiance. Council Members do not vote in one direction and Council Member do not look at one direction. Council Members look at the entire city and they have been supporting, giving assets and revenue, and budgeted items to the West End. They have been taking care of the parks and other areas in Sierra Vista. Now, there is an opportunity to keep something that brought people here. He shared that he retired from the Army here, and he has met people, his Drill Sergeant in 1988, who he meets almost every Sunday at the golf course because it is a gathering place. There are organizations that meet at the golf course because it is a gathering place and it is one of the only places where there can be meetings, weekly meetings, monthly meetings. Although, it was a private course, it is now open to the public and the Council is going to make sure that the management company

that is being brought in runs it in a correct way. The golf course makes money. It made money for Castle and Cooke and now the golf course will be used to keep people in the community and to continue to bring people to the community. There is an opportunity to make money and it is not being used as a write off and noted that he will not state that Castle and Cooke did, but it sold houses. It did what it was supposed to do. The City can operate it better and more efficiently. The City does a lot of things for the community, and this is not about picking one area or demographic. It is a retirement community. A golf course in any city has its purpose. PDS is known for their greens, and it probably has the hardest greens in Southern Arizona. It is challenging and makes it different than a lot of other courses because it is not a link style course. Therefore, at the end of the day, Council owes it to the City, not just the local houses surrounding that area to keep something that brought people out to Sierra Vista. Lastly, he stated that people say that this is a retirement community, but the average age is 44 years old. It is not a retirement community and the Council services and tends to everybody because that is what Council is supposed to do. Council sits at the dais and makes hard decisions because that is what Sierra Vista residents voted for them to do.

Council Member Rodriguez stated that Council has received a lot of comments and on the surface, this looks like a city behind a failing golf course, but that is not what is happening when looking at the potential. There are so many things that could be done that people that work there have wanted to do for years, but unfortunately Castle and Cooke has gone against. They did not want to grow, nor did they want to make the place better. The Council Members are going to make sure that the City works with a company who does not think like that because Council wants the best outcome possible for the situation. Everyone sees the potential and although, it is a \$30,000 a loss, the City has no agenda as noted on some emails, texts, and phone calls. He voiced his appreciation for all the comments on something that affects the community, thanked the people who came out to the meeting, thanked the staff that has done some amazing research to include looking at other companies, looking all over for the best solution in the shortest amount of time to an unrealistic timeline that Castle and Cooke has provided. He noted that staff has given Council facts so that Council could make this quick decision to vote on because the alternative is not good. There are probably 320 houses that touch the golf course, and if the golf course were to go into disrepair, disarray, all the weeds, etc. would all be in everyone's backyard, which would be horrible for the community. He shared that he is at Winter Haven every month on the third Saturday doing smoke detector checks and he meets a lot of people that live by themselves, but they feel safe, which is very important, and he would not want that to go away. He noted that the blight would be horrible as well the vacancy that would happen to an open pit if the golf course was abandoned. There are about 30 employees that work there, as well as volunteers that are important to Council. The plan for the City is to keep that going, to keep it flowing and become more profitable than it has been. He added that the Council members are not golf experts, and the City is not going to take over and run it. This is a big misconception and noted that professionals do what they do and that is who the City is going to hire. It is not a demographic, PDS is for all ages and there are many reasons for people living in that area. In closing he recommended that people with gift cards to use them fast because before they are no longer valid.

Council Member Johnson quoted Mark Twain, "golf is a good walk spoiled." He noted that he has had several discussions with some key board warriors lately about this whole issue on Facebook and they say golf is a dying sport. Therefore, he did some research and found that it is not. The National Golf Foundation showed 24.8 million golfers in 2020 in the United States. There are over 60 million worldwide and that was up from the COVID era of 2019. There are more youth playing ever golf since the Tigers Masters win. Women golfers are part of the surge with over 450 or eight percent increase over 2019. He shared that he gave up golf because of

his rheumatoid arthritis, but it was a great game. Some individuals would rather let the property deteriorate thus lowering home values throughout the city, not just Winter Haven. This would lower the tax base and the City would lose the opportunity to receive a beautiful property that was appraised for \$1.6 million in 2020 and is probably worth more today for the forgiveness of \$600,000 worth of debt, which the City will amortize over time when the sewer fund is repaid. The Council does not want to lose the opportunity for a future event center that is already there. The Council would like to expand it and staff has already been looking into that. The City would lose the opportunity for future profits when the property is managed properly. In closing, he stated that he was monitoring City Council e-mail and would like to make it a part of the record. There were eight emails for Council voting for it and one against.

Mayor McCaa apologize that he could not be in attendance due to a family reunion that was scheduled for the past year. He voiced his appreciation to everyone in the audience and noted that it shows that they are concerned about the city. He noted that there would be an economic impact if the golf course closed and shared that he is meeting with Black Star Orbital in Phoenix and the perception of a golf course closing could be like a disease gone wild. The City Council does not want that. They look at the economic impact that this golf course has. The Huachucans do a yearly U.S. Open, which brings in about 70,000 a year, the Boys and Girl Scouts do a golf tournament which brings in about 20,000 a year, Lori's Place, who supports the Sierra Vista Police Department with forensic interviews, brings in about 20,000, and the University South Foundation brings in about 20,000. All this funding goes into scholarships, back into the community that supports the community as well as Cochise County. It would be a detriment if this golf course goes away. He acknowledged Ryan Hightower, Cynthia Means, Jeff Jennings, James Pregler, Terry Diffey, Joe Krabs, Kelly Burns, Rick Barr, and Doctor Randy Groth. Lastly, he stated that he cannot let this golf course go and he hopes that everyone will support the Council going forward. In closing, he thanked the city manager, assistant city manager and staff for doing an amazing investigation on how to get this golf course and to sustain it. Therefore, he cannot let this go and he will be voting for it. He agreed with Council Member Benning in that Castle and Cooke made money - golf course makes money.

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey stated that there is nothing that she could add that has not already been said. She further stated that there were a lot of excellent points made by her fellow Council Members and Mayor McCaa. The Council received quite a few emails and it was funny to her how she did not realize how many people have her cell phone number until something like this comes up because she sees a lot of these people in person; however, in talking to her customers throughout the day, she realized that there was a pro and con list. Some were valid and this is not an ideal situation, but a lot of that has to do with timing. One of Council's main concern was that the timing for public comment which was not going to be sufficient. The Council wanted to make sure that there was enough time for everyone to provide feedback before Council made a big decision. In closing, she thanked everyone for taking the time on a Monday night to be in attendance.

The motion unanimously carried, 7/0. Mayor McCaa, Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey, Council Members Benning, Johnson, Landry, Messmer, and Rodriguez voted in favor.

Adjournment

Mayor Pro Tem Umphrey adjourned the July 8, 2024, special meeting of the Sierra Vista City Council at 5:13 p.m.

A recording of the Council Meeting is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8PtUpIbkQsixIhSy-jeR_Q/videos