



Council questions and staff responses for items on September 9, 2021 City Council Meeting

Item 8.3- Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding the first renewal of a sponsorship agreement with Land of Lights, Inc., DBA Santa's Wonderland, in the amount of \$150,000.

Sponsor: Kindra Fry/Natalie Ruiz

Question: I would like a better understanding of what the 150K will be spent on. Our packet indicates "services" and "promoting, but what is that exactly? Last year, I believed the money was spent on a sign by the skating rink portion of the Santa Wonderland site. Is there data to suggest that the sign resulted in patrons coming into College Station that otherwise would not have come into town? How many hotel bookings would have to be made to recoup 150K in HOT tax fees for example?

Response: The partnership with Santa's Wonderland includes:

- Creative digital marketing campaigns targeting Santa's Wonderland Customer database
- Additional digital marketing campaigns to Austin, San Antonio, Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth
- Special webpages dedicated to College Station hotels (Santa Certified Hotels)
- Custom College Station branded sign at Illuminations Ice Skating Arena

The creative digital marketing campaigns will be on the Santa's Wonderland social channels as well as the Visit College Station social channels. The campaigns allow for College Station specific marketing directly to Santa's Wonderland customers. The other marketing campaigns will be co-produced as well. While it seems like an interesting partnership with the signage at the Ice Skating Arena, the additional publicity the City of College Station received from people taking photos and posting them to their own social media accounts was valuable. Santa's Wonderland also included the skating rink and signage in their advertising photos and postings. It is difficult to truly put a number behind that return, but by virtue of those postings taking place, College Station received additional brand awareness by sponsoring that portion.

In 2020, Santa's Wonderland (through Audience Marketing) reports there were approximately 320,000 visitors to the destination. Of those, over 24% stated they were planning to stay the night via a survey at the point of purchase for the tickets. This survey does ask if they people are planning to stay in hotels, Short Term Rentals, with friends or other means. This means there were multiple hotel stays by the numbers. When Visit College Station conducted the hotel pick-ups with our hotels, we learned that there were almost 3,000 room nights generated. I believe it is an understatement because our hotels were not tracking the information fully and they spoke with us about that following last year's program. However, we have put new mechanisms in place to collect that data directly from the Santa Certified Hotels this year. So, I believe we will see an increase in those numbers reported following this season.

To see a return on investment directly from Hotel Tax generations for the \$150,000 investment, we would have to see close to 25,000 room nights generated. However, I believe in this case the investment is more than the hotel room nights that will be generated. It is building brand awareness for the City of College Station and the Christmas in College Station programs, as well as building new audiences that can be directly marketed to for bringing other events and meetings to our community. By building upon this partnership, we are able to gain access to data and demographics that we otherwise do not have the capabilities of gathering at this current time. It is a great example of a public-private partnership that generates business across the College Station hospitality, retail and entertainment sectors, as well as significant sales tax for the city.

Item 8.4- Presentation, discussion, and possible action to authorize expenditure of funds for Fiscal Year 2002 for items exempt from competitive bidding as described more fully in the Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 252.022 and other expenditures for interlocal contracts or fees mandated by state law that are greater than \$100,000; and to authorize the City Manager to approve contracts and expenditures that are on the exemption list.

Sponsor: Mary Ellen Leonard

Question: How long is the ILA for preferred access with A&M? Last year we had NO access, but our financial obligation to them INCREASED. In prior years I have understood that there was limited access. When can we renegotiate the ILA? It seems to be a substantial financial obligation with limited opportunity for College Station.

The ILA with Bryan for library is a 2 year contract. Which year is that up for renewal? If these stay on the exemption list, does that mean they will not appear on our consent agenda in the future?

Response: Items on the exemption list are contractual obligations of the City over \$100,000 that the City is obligated to pay. Approval of these items on consent enables staff to process payments as required under the terms of the signed agreement. Payments do not come to Council once approved.

The Preferred Access Agreement was signed in 2014 and goes through 2043. Payments of \$1,225,000 are due to from the County from Hotel Tax receipts. What is not paid by the County is due from the City from Hotel Tax receipts.

The Library ILA expires October 1, 2022. New contracts are brought to Council for approval.

Item 8.5- Presentation, discussion, and possible action on a resolution approving the City's investment policy, reviewing, and recording changes to such policy and strategy, approving a collateral policy, and designating investment officers for fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, stating that the City Council has reviewed and approved the City's Investment policy, Broker-Dealer List and Investment Strategy.

Sponsor: Michael Dehaven

Question: I note that there is an addition of Exhibit B, the OPEB funding policy. Is this now relevant because we have caught up on the full funding that we have worked toward over the past several

years? In other words, now that we have caught up, we need a funding policy to guide annual decisions on funding. Or is there some other reason why we did not have an OPEB Funding policy previously?

Response: Now that we have paid down the liability to the recommended limit, the OPEB Policy is necessary to establish policies into the future to ensure the liability does not increase.

Item 9.1- Public Hearing, presentation, discussion, and possible action on Budget Amendment 4 amending Ordinance No. 2020-4206 which will amend the budget for the 2021-2021 Fiscal Year in the amount of \$570,000.

Sponsor: Mary Ellen Leonard

Question: Which pool was damaged by Uri? Which roads were affected in roadway repairs? Are the revenues listed on Exhibit A actual receipts or rounded amounts?

Response: The Adamson Lagoon cloudy water issue in June was related to damage from Winter Storm Uri.

The increase in roadway maintenance is due to increase in material costs for in-process planned maintenance.

The revenue amounts listed for Sales and HOT Tax are rounded as we don't have the final year end numbers yet. The ARPA amount is the exact amount received.

Item 9.8- Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding an ordinance consenting to and extending the Mayor's renewal of a disaster declaration due to a public health emergency.

Sponsor: Bryan Woods

Question: What does declaring an emergency exactly make us eligible for? Why does this not correlate to being able to produce a quorum by Zoom? Why are city appointed boards' board members unable to attend board meetings via Zoom and have that count as a quorum if we are under a declared state of emergency?

Response: Declaring a local state of disaster provides for the ability for local officials to exercise emergency powers to preserve life, property, and public health. It also ensures the City's eligibility for funding in response to the declared disaster. On advice of Legal and Emergency Management, we continue to maintain the state of disaster.

Early on in the pandemic, and using his powers through the State's declared disaster, Governor Abbott suspended certain portions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, including the requirement to meet in person. However, at the request of the Texas Attorney General's Office to lift the suspension at 12:01 am on September 1, 2021. Thus as of that date, all provisions of the Open Meetings Act will be effective and governmental bodies subject to the act must conduct their meetings in full compliance with the existing statutes.

