

Commissioners Minutes

December 11, 2024 – 2:30 p.m. to 3:42 p.m.

**MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CITY OF CALDWELL'S PLANS FOR A PROPOSED HOTEL LOCATED AT STOCK TRAIL ROAD AND 21<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE IN CALDWELL**

Commissioners Brad Holton, Zach Brooks, and Leslie Van Beek

Chief Civil Deputy PA Aaron Bazzoli

COO Greg Rast

Constituent Services Director Aaron Williams

Fair Director Diana Sinner

Facilities Director Rick Britton

Treasurer Jennifer Watters

Assessor Brian Stender

Senior Systems Analyst Steve Onofrei

Councilman Chuck Stadick (attended as a private citizen)

Councilwoman Diana Register (attended as a private citizen)

Interested citizens

Deputy PA Zach Wesley arrived at 3:36 p.m.

Deputy Clerk Monica Reeves



MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CITY OF CALDWELL'S PLANS FOR A PROPOSED HOTEL LOCATED AT STOCK TRAIL ROAD AND 21<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE IN CALDWELL

The Board met today at 2:30 p.m. to discuss the City of Caldwell's plans for a proposed hotel on the dirt parking lot located at Stock Trail Road and S. 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Present were: Commissioners Brad Holton, Zach Brooks, and Leslie Van Beek, Chief Civil Deputy PA Aaron Bazzoli, COO Greg Rast, Constituent Services Director Aaron Williams, Fair Director Diana Sinner, Facilities Director Rick Britton, Treasurer Jennifer Watters, Assessor Brian Stender, Senior Systems Analyst Steve Onofrei, Councilman Chuck Stadick and Councilwoman Diana Register, who attended as private citizens, other interested citizens, and Deputy Clerk Monica Reeves. Deputy PA Zach Wesley arrived at 3:36 p.m. Today's meeting was scheduled to be a joint meeting between the County Commissioners and the Caldwell City Council; however, the City declined to attend. Today's discussion centered on the Board's concern with the lack of communication from the City on this issue and how the proposed hotel will impact the Fair.

COO Rast prepared a PowerPoint addressing some items that were discussed during the Caldwell City Council meeting on December 2, 2024, a copy of the PowerPoint is on file with this day's minute entry. Commissioner Van Beek said she appreciates the questions that Councilwoman Diana Register asked at the recent council meeting, and said there was a genuine interest in trying to establish everything from the basis of the RFP, the safety of our 4-H and FFA community to the

inclusion of the County as an essential landowner. She also has concerns about the letters of approval that were missing information from the presentation that was provided to the council by Steve Jenkins, the City's Economic Development Director. Commissioner Brooks is frustrated that the County's vested interest is being marginalized and our concerns are being disregarded. Commissioner Holton is disappointed with the lack of communication, and said the City's decision not only has health and safety concerns but it will also impact the function and viability of the Fair in addition to impacting County taxpayers by impacting tax rates countywide. The County is trying to determine the best way to work together and correct what the City put on the record that the County is in conflict with. It was inaccurately reported that the hotel has been approved; there is a letter of intent passed by the council, but that is not an approval. The approval was scheduled for December 16, but has been pushed to January. Director Jenkins did not have a clear number on the what the property was worth per square foot. There have also been conversations related to a potential land swap, but that could be more injurious to the Fair.

There was discussion on the following topics:

- The City approved an event district for the area that could be in conflict with the deeds from the Griffiths family. What is the purpose of the event district?
- In November of 2024, the City met with Commissioner Brooks, COO Rast, and Director Sinner where they discussed concerns about parking for the Fair and the impacts the proposed hotel will have on the 4-H programs due to parking concerns and the potential for 4-H kids having to carry feed and bedding for livestock across a busy road/railroad track. They also talked about the County's request to delay construction until after the 2025 Fair and Caldwell Night Rodeo.
- The City has said the project will add 198 parking stalls, 77 above code and 23 trailer stalls, but COO Rast said that number isn't accurate. The developer has said 251 parking stalls will be put around the hotel with an additional 120 stalls used for events. The City has said they counted 160 vehicles that were in the dirt parking lot during events, but an aerial photo indicates there are 295 slots on the lot, and the hotel will give an additional 120 slots. The County wants to know what the parking plan is.
- Concerns regarding the City's plans to dismantle the Charolais barn and the resulting impacts of that.
- Director Sinner addressed the parking that is available during the Fair and how they make the most efficient use of the dirt lot and the other parking areas available to them. She questioned when the City counted the number of cars on the lot because in her experience, the lot remains nearly full during the Fair. She voiced concerns with the City's

plans for the Charolais barn and gave a history of the work the City and County performed in 2018 on replacing the divider walls and related work. The walls are crucial to the Fair because they tie cattle on both sides of the divider walls. They have nowhere else to tie cattle, and replacements would be expensive with panels costing \$106,065, and that includes a \$40,000 discount.

- Regarding the City's recommendation on paving, Director Sinner said the swine pens are on concrete and the concern is they are not considering what surface they are putting down. We cannot have a slick surface, it has to be a broom finish and selected based upon a sample. After frequent cleanouts the broom finish will become slick at some point.
- Director Sinner said the City has suggested putting the wash station on County property without communicating with the County. They were talking about the rabbit barn not being effectively used for rabbits, but they have not had rabbits in that building since 2019. Improvements have been made to the building, it has a concrete floor and air conditioning and it is utilized by Facilities staff during the Fair.
- Facilities Director Rick Britton spoke about the issue of replacing all of the asphalt and the City's statement that the project can be done in half a day. He believes it will take a minimum of 6-8 months for the design, permitting, and work phases.
- There are concerns with the City's suggestion to relocate the portable barns behind the Charolais barn. The City also encouraged that the red barns be demolished, but that is County property and is used for storage throughout the year, and during the Fair it's for people showing sheep/goats.
- The City recommends converting part of Gabiola Field to road mix for year-round parking, but Director Sinner has concerns with that because it's currently grass which is cooler than any other surface. Road mix will create dust.
- Regarding the timeline for the hotel, COO Rast said at the discussion on November 6, the City said they would break ground after the Fair and the rodeo but they have not upheld what they said they would do and they seem to be more concerned about January through May events rather than the Fair or the rodeo. The timelines do not coincide with the conversations they have had.
- Concerns of inaccuracies with the City's estimations on property value and the estimated income. It was represented that the bare lot was worth \$3M which the City is proposing to rent for \$5,000 a year.

- A warranty and gift deed from the Griffiths Family: The property was deeded to the City of Caldwell for three specific uses: County Fair; Ag Expo, and public use purposes. COO Rast said if the hotel is constructed on the dirt lot we may have to move the Fair to the southeast side and invoke our use of the baseball fields and what that is known as Griffith's Park. We have rights to those areas, but the City does not want the County to move that direction.

Commissioner Van Beek said if the hotel goes forward without plausible mitigation efforts, the County will suffer harm in the long-term, and there has to be a plan that provides for something in the community that's enjoyed by a lot a lot of people. There are a lot of unattended consequences of the plan. She said the County is working with the Fair Director and there are plans being developed for the expansion and future of the Fair and those plans will soon be available. COO Rast said it's his opinion the City Council is not getting the full story of the conversations that have occurred with City and County officials. Commissioner Van Beek read a statement which was summarized as follows: *"... The Board will vigorously defend the intent of the Griffiths Family to maintain the site as the home of the County Fair against any restrictions of the County Fair's use or any attempts to convert the property to private commercial use."*

(Chief Civil Deputy PA Bazzoli left at 3:33 p.m.)

Commissioner Brooks said in his conversations with City officials we could not be on more opposite ends of the interpretation of the language of those deeds and that is the crux of the unfortunate position the Council and the Mayor have taken where they will do what they want. He said the courts may have to decide, but he hopes both groups can work together. Commissioner Van Beek said there is a way to get to good solutions but you have to have willing partners and she will stay committed to that. Commissioner Holton said it's clear the County does not have direct jurisdiction over the lot but the City has a history of working with the other entities, but he doesn't know where that spirit went and he believes the council was presented with grossly inaccurate information. The lack of communication is manipulative and he would not want to be the hotel developer because he may have his money held up during the challenge. It's not a threat, it's a concern and the County will do everything within its power to not end up costing the taxpayer more money because of this plan and it frustrates him to ponder the possibility of wasting legal time on a challenge when we could work together towards a long-term solution for the Fair. COO Rast said he was told by the Mayor that the Commissioners had the opportunity to attend the council meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup> to give their opinions on this matter. However, it's difficult for the Board to show up at a public meeting without it being on the agenda. He said the County did not send a letter of support or opposition because it did not know what the December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was going to do. Upon the motion of Commissioner Van Beek and the second by Commissioner Brooks, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:42 p.m. An audio recording is on file in the Commissioners' Office.