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(S.D.)-Many Benefits To City Owning Evan's Plunge If Vote Finalized



By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 03/27/2013 09:18 AM

(Hot Springs)-In a special election on Tuesday, voters in Hot Springs demonstrated to officials they are very definitely of two varying opinions. The vote on whether citizens want the City to purchase Evan's Plunge was 380 in favor and 369 opposing the purchase. City Administrator Harley Lux said if the vote in favor is finalized, the City Council will need to address an ordinance at their next meeting on April 1.

The current proposal is to re-establish a 5-9 member parks and recreation board which would be established under an ordinance that was tabled at the last council meeting pending the election. South Dakota law allows for the board to be created, and after its creation the Board can then enter into agreements with other organizations to run parks and organizations under the city, which officials propose that Evan's Plunge fall under the board.

If the Board is established, he said there are several options of how Evan's Plunge will be run. According to Lux, the City could enter into an agreement with Southern Hills Recreation Initiative, which is a 501c3, Healing Waters Group or some combination of both entities, which may choose to put in proposal for the operation of Evan's Plunge. It is also possible that the City may operate the facility on its own like other communities do with swimming pools and then a manager would be hired through the City.

Although the City would be the entity purchasing the facility if the votes are finalized, Lux said they were not the original parties entering into a purchase agreement. A group of private citizens put up money for an escrow agreement to lock in the purchase until an election could be held one way or the other. The City has until May 1 to transfer the agreement to the City, and then complete the purchase by October 1.

If the purchase is made by the City, Lux pointed out that it will not only benefit the community by having the draw of the warm water in the winter. Lux stated that the water rights for Evan's Plunge date back to 1890. Having the facility being locally controlled is one benefit, but the City obtaining the water rights by purchasing the facility could be more beneficial than the Plunge itself.

If the vote is challenged because of the close numbers, there will be a recount. Otherwise, Lux said the canvassing board will more than likely meet on Monday to finalize the vote, and then the City will proceed with the proper measures to finalize the purchase. The April 1 meeting of the Hot Springs City Council begins at 7 pm and is open to the public.

(Questions? Comments? Email news@chadrad.com)

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