

MINUTES
ALTA TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, March 11, 2020, 4:00 PM
Alta Community Center, 10351 E. Highway 210, Alta, Utah

PRESENT: Mayor Harris Sondak
Council Member Margaret Bourke
Council Member Cliff Curry
Council Member Elise Morgan
Council Member Sheridan Davis

STAFF PRESENT: John Guldner, Town Administrator
Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator
Piper Lever, Town Clerk
Jen Clancy, Deputy Town Clerk
Mike Morey, Town Marshal
Polly McLean, Town Attorney
Jay Torgersen, UFA

WORK SESSION

- **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS OF ADJUSTING UFSA COMMON BOUNDARY AND TIMELINE OF JOINING UFSA**

00:00:15

Mayor Sondak called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM and welcomed those in attendance. He introduced the item of discussion for the work session. The Town of Alta is currently paying \$153,000 to the Unified Fire Authority (UFA) for fire services. Based on UFA calculations, the actual cost of those services is \$627,000. In previous years, the difference was made up by the Recreation Area Fee, which had been informal until recently. The Recreation Area was formally defined in October 2019 and the Town of Alta was excluded. Mayor Sondak noted that the \$627,000 figure fluctuated with usage because they are a direct contractor with UFA. The Town of Alta was responsible for 29% of the usage figure. The factors that lead to that cost are complicated. The Town could continue to be a member of UFA, or they could join the United Fire Service Area (UFSA), which is a taxing district. Based on the UFSA taxing model, the properties in Town would be charged \$533,000. Joining UFSA would lead to an increase in property tax by about 14.5%. The third possibility was to leave UFA entirely and create a volunteer fire department, which seemed improbable at this point. To further a complicated situation, the UFSA's budget year begins on July 1st. Mayor Sondak had asked the UFSA attorney what would happen if the Town didn't join at the beginning of the budget year, and the attorney was unsure. If the Town didn't join UFSA, they would probably receive the first quarterly bill from UFA. It was unclear how that would be resolved if they joined UFSA after that first installment was paid to UFA.

00:09:50

Council Member Curry asked if the negotiation process with UFA and Salt Lake County would be public. Town Attorney Polly McLean said that they could designate two individuals from the Council to negotiate with the other parties, or UFA and Salt Lake County could speak with each Council Member one-on-one. Mayor Sondak added that the County was quite clear that they would not be remitting any more money on behalf of the Town of Alta. The rate with UFSA was not negotiable. Council Member Curry said that they should negotiate a gradual on-ramp into UFSA. Attorney McLean said that may be possible through an interlocal agreement. The Town should also look at their own budget to be sure that money is coming from the right budgets. Mayor Sondak anticipated that they would have to raise property taxes gradually or all at once, whether they stay with UFA or move to UFSA. He recommended switching to UFSA.

00:24:18

Council Member Bourke requested more data showing UFA's calculations for the cost of services. Maybe the Town's rate would decrease by using Gold Cross when the clinic was stabilizing individuals in Alta. If they raised property tax, they were essentially asking Alta property owners to pay for services they hardly ever use. There were even some homes that were inaccessible for emergency vehicles in the winter. It was a lot to ask of them. She asked if they would be getting better services if they switched to UFSA, such as a four-person crew rather than a three-person crew. She also wondered how the change would affect their ISO rating. If the rating went down and gave their citizens a lower insurance rate, and that could justify the tax increase.

Mayor Sondak said that the Chief of UFA made it clear that he would not sell fire protection separate from emergency transport services. Using Gold Cross would not provide any additional savings. Attorney McLean confirmed. They were aware that the formula was unfair to the Town of Alta because it penalized the Town every time EMS was called for skiing accidents. The Chief felt that using the Gold Cross to save on cost was "gaming the system". Council Member Bourke said that there was an exemption for towns with less than 1,000 people which says that they could still be charged for transport even when it doesn't occur. She didn't feel that this exception was fair. Mayor Sondak briefly spoke about a four-person crew versus a three-person crew. He wasn't sure how the USFA determined crew sizes for their stations. The Council felt it was worth negotiating with USFA for a four-person crew.

00:38:32

Mark Haik, a citizen, said that he briefly looked at the information that was posted with the meeting agenda. He urged the Council to examine all of their options before they have to fulfill the requirements to enter into the UFSA. Their timeframe to get this done was 120 days, and that was a quick turnaround. The Town should get an official legal opinion about their options.

00:41:46

Mike Maughan, with Alta Ski Area, commented on the use of Gold Cross and said that they had experienced difficulties when they were responding all the way from the valley.

Council Member Bourke suggested exploring the option of having transportation costs covered by the visitors, since the majority of Town calls come during ski season. She had received call data

for the last five years from Jay Torgerson with UFA. The percentage of EMS called to Alta residents was 0.3%. The rest were visitors. Over the past five years, there were 800 calls. Of that, 683 were visitors, two were residents, with the rest labeled as “null”.

00:47:05

Scott Briggs, a property owner, said that it was unfair to have the residents take on the burden caused by visitors. The property owners don’t gain any revenue from the visitor, and that should be taken into account.

Mayor Sondak said that there was an option to impose a transient room tax on the hotel guests, which could raise between \$100,000 and \$120,000 annually. Most municipalities already impose this tax.

00:49:55

Attorney McLean asked if the Council wanted to designate one or two members to speak with the County and see if they were willing to provide some kind of on-ramping. Council Member Davis requested more information regarding other funding options, including the transient room tax, property tax increase, and items that may need to be cut from the budget. She also said that businesses should take on some of the responsibility for this expense.

The work session was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

REGULAR SESSION

1. CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

00:58:10

Mayor Sondak called the meeting to order 5:01 PM and expressed appreciation for those in attendance.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

00:58:15

Del Draper, with the Secret Lake Cabin Owners Association, said he attended the US Forest Service meeting yesterday regarding the proposal to create parking for the Shrontz project. The proposal was essentially to widen the summer road for the first 700 feet by adding a third lane. In the winter, one of those lanes would be plowed and used for additional parking. Draper commented that this plan was unsafe, and there had to be a better way to add 20 parking stalls. When he spoke with Bekee Hotze, she said that the Town of Alta had an agreement with the Shrontz Estate that required those parking spaces to be on the Shrontz property. He urged the Council to look at that agreement and see if it could be altered.

01:03:00

Dan Gates, a property owner in Cecret Lake, said that UFA was a taxing entity to provide a way to pay for fire service. His concern with choosing UFSA was losing control of the taxing right. He would almost prefer to see the Town stay in control.

Mayor Sondak said that being part of the UFSA would give the Town a seat on that board. There would also be provisions in the interlocal agreement with UFSA that would allow them to exit the entity, if necessary.

01:06:04

Mark Haik, a citizen, said that the Council should make a decision quickly, because most of their action need to take place before July 1st.

3. ALTA SKI AREA UPDATE

01:07:40

Mike Maughan reported that business levels within the Ski Area are consistent with last year's numbers. They expected to see a softening this week. Some resorts had experienced room cancellations in response to the threat of the coronavirus and travel restrictions. They anticipated seeing that affect in Alta, but they didn't know to what extent. In the meantime, they were making plans for emergencies and potential quarantine. Mr. Maughan had sent a letter to UDOT about a short term parking solution, and he encouraged the Town Council to look at those solutions and support him with their own letter to UDOT. Regarding the parking on the Shrontz property, he said that the Alta Ski Area also wasn't comfortable with the proposal due to safety, current users and snow removal concerns. They were open to other options, including considering modifying the Deed which required the 20 spots on the property. He noted the litigation with the Shrontz property owners was over. He noted that he would be in favor of switching to UFSA.

4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING RESOLUTION 2020-R-4 CONCERNING NUMBER OF DOG LICENSES

01:18:30

Mayor Sondak introduced the item and said that it was the time of year to discuss the dog license ordinance. He asked Deputy Clerk Jen Clancy to summarize the proposed resolution.

Ms. Clancy said that in previous years, the Council decided that the number of dog licenses should reflect 25% of the most recent census population. Based on the 2010 census, they were allowing 95 total dog licenses. A new census was being conducted, and the Town would receive new numbers in 2021. Staff anticipated a decrease in population from the previous census. Ms. Clancy explained that they recently went through the renewal process for dog licenses, and six licenses were forfeited this year. Three were in the Class C category, one was a Class B, and two were Class A licenses. The draft resolution before the Council kept the licenses at the same number, but they could elect to change it.

Mayor Sondak said that they could consider getting rid of those six licenses altogether, because they did expect a decreased population at the next census. It was difficult to take dog licenses

away from people. The Council discussed the possibility of shrinking the number of Class C licenses. There were currently 14 active licenses.

MOTION: Council Member Davis moved to ADOPT Resolution 2020-R-4 concerning the number of dog licenses, with 33 Class A licenses, 43 Class B licenses, 11 Class C licenses, and 10 Class D licenses. Council Member Bourke seconded the motion.

The Council discussed the motion and the number of licenses in each category. Council Member Bourke questioned the fee for temporary licenses. They needed to be sure that they had the same distinction for spay and neuter as the other licenses. Ms. Clancy said that it was difficult to get the spay and neuter information from people renewing their licenses every year. It would be even more difficult to get that information from individuals seeking a temporary license. Council Member Bourke just wanted to ensure that people were being charged appropriately.

MOTION: Council Member Bourke moved to amend Section 2 of the resolution to reflect that the fee for Class D licenses less than 14 days would be \$125, regardless of whether the dogs are spayed or neutered. Council Member Davis seconded the motion. A vote was taken, with Council Members Bourke, Davis, Morgan, and Mayor Sondak voting “aye”, and Council Member Curry voting “nay”. The motion passed, 4 to 1.

Council Member Curry addressed the last sentence of Section 2, which used to give the Mayor the discretion to waive fees for Class D Licenses if the applicant could demonstrate financial hardship. He suggested that this language be added back into the resolution.

MOTION: Council Member Curry moved to amend the resolution by inserting the following language at the end of Section 2: “The Mayor shall have discretion to waive fees for Class D Licenses, in whole or in part, for cause shown, as the Mayor deems reasonable”. Mayor Sondak seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Council.

Mayor Sondak called the question on the motion to adopt Resolution 2020-R-4, as amended. The motion passed with unanimous consent of the Council.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

- Treasurers Report for February 2020, including budget highlights
- Town Council Meeting minutes for February 12, 2020
- Staff Report

01:39:03

MOTION: Council Member Davis moved that the Town Council APPROVE the Consent Agenda. Council Member Bourke seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous consent of the Council, with Council Member Morgan abstaining from the vote.

6. UFA REPORT

01:41:18

Jay Torgerson provided an update from UFA. They were currently preparing for the threat of COVID-19 and how it would affect the fire department, anticipating an approximate 30% reduction in work force.. They would still respond to all calls coming in, but they did expect a decrease in the workforce as people become infected. UFA was also following the distracted driver legislation. Regarding a four-person crew at Station 113, Mr. Torgerson encouraged the Town Council to engage in that discussion with UFA, but a 1/3 increase in costs changing from a 3 to 4 person crew.

7. QUESTIONS REGARDING DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

01:51:45

Attorney McLean asked the Town Council how they felt about Mike Morey's suggestion for an interlodge ordinance amendment. Council Member Morgan said that it was something they needed to discuss, but she was comfortable waiting a few months. It didn't need to be on next month's agenda. Council Member Bourke commented that an ordinance amendment was just one of the options Mike Morey was pursuing to address the problem. The Council was in favor of waiting.

8. MAYOR'S REPORT

01:54:55

Mayor Sondak reported that Gene Libre passed away a few weeks ago, and he offered his condolences. On February 18th, Mayor Sondak attended a UFA Board meeting. They elected a new chair and vice chair, reviewed the monthly financial documents, and had an extensive legislative update. On February 21st, he attended a meeting with a small group, including Professor McNeely, on an Environmental Dashboard for the CWC. There was a meeting with the Selection Advisory Committee to discuss the RFP for the feasibility and programming of the community center. The CWC met on March 9th and they discussed insurance coverage, confirmed some board positions, and approved the Town of Brighton's application to join the CWC, and sought public input on short term project ideas. On March 10th, he attended a town initial budget committee meeting. Mayor Sondak reported on the temporary dog licenses that were granted since the previous meeting: Cathy Moore for 30 days; Sophie Danforth for 14 days; Larry Williams for 21 days; Hugh Ferguson for 9 days; and Sophie Danforth for another 14 days.

9. COVID-19 UPDATE

02:07:17

Chris Cawley, as Emergency Manager, provided an update on COVID-19. The memo he gave to the Council outlined what the Town was doing to coordinate with the County and get information out to the public. Staff had drafted a Declaration of Emergency for the Town of Alta in case that is needed. Salt Lake City had declared a State of Emergency earlier that day. The primary purpose of the Declaration of Emergency was to open up pathways for funding and other emergency support from higher levels of government, and to provide emergency powers to governmental entities. Staff was preparing a plan of action if someone in the community is tested positive for COVID-19. It was suggested that entities keep track of additional costs they incur as a result of COVID-19. Staff had reached out to the Health Department and received specific guidance about

handling a hotel guest or employee who was infected. They also suggested having sick leave policies consistent with State Code, and a good supply of medicine and food on hand. People seeking information regarding the virus should contact their own doctors or the CDC through the public health number provided. It was very likely that schools would be shut down soon. Drs. Libre and Anciales relayed some of their experiences and offered some education on the subject of the virus. Dr. Libre asked if anyone could provide a 4-walled tent to be used for virus -related exams outside of the Alta Medical Clinic.

10. NEW BUSINESS

02:57:05

Council Member Curry stated for the record the mayor had confirmed through Counsel McLean that Commissioner Roger Bourke would remain on the Planning Commission until a replacement Commission Member was appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Town Council.

11. MOTION TO ADJOURN

MOTION: Council Member Curry moved to ADJOURN at 7:02 PM. Council Member Davis seconded the motion. The motion carried with unanimous consent of the Council.

APPROVED by Alta Town Council on April 8, 2020

Piper Lever, Town Clerk / s