



Agenda Item: Letter of Support

Title: Consideration of a letter of support to the Office of State Lands and Investments for the Pilot Hill land-swap proposal and a request for inclusion in the public record during the 60-day comment period ending June 3, 2020.

Recommended Council MOTION:

I move that Council approve the letter of support to the Office of State Lands and Investments for the Pilot Hill land-swap proposal and also request its inclusion in the public record during the 60-day comment period ending June 3, 2020 and authorize the Mayor and Clerk to sign.

Administrative or Policy Goal:

Council Goals: Resolution 2020-08, adopting policy goals and objectives for 2020. Under the section 'Maintain and Improve City Services to Residents, Milestone #4' it states; "Support effort to acquire additional recreational and open space east of Laramie (Pilot Hill) for aquifer protection."

Background:

The objective for the Pilot Hill Project is to preserve ~5,500 acres of undeveloped open space east of Laramie in order to protect the Casper aquifer drinking water resource, conserve critical wildlife habitat areas, enhance educational and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and promote economic development by providing a world-class natural amenity to attract and retain businesses and their employees.

The Pilot Hill Project continues to move forward and is now another step closer to completion, as the Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments has released a detailed analysis of the proposed land exchange to acquire the parcel. The analysis is available on the OSLI website, lands.wyo.gov, and in hard copy at the Office of State Lands' main office in Cheyenne. A public hearing to solicit public comments is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 5:30 PM. The meeting will convene via web conference and is open to the public. If you wish to provide comments or ask questions, please register for the meeting [here](#). Additionally, the meeting will be streaming live at lands.wyo.gov for the public to view.

Oversight committee Co-Chair Tony Hoch said he was excited to see the land exchange process nearing completion after more than two years of work. "This is the most important project for aquifer and wildlife habitat protection, as well as connection to accessible open space, that Laramie has ever seen," Hoch said. "By utilizing this exchange with the Office of State Lands, we are preserving the land and fulfilling the wishes of the Laramie community and the private property owner who currently owns the land."

The analysis identifies 11,668 acres of isolated state trust land in Albany and Laramie counties, appraised at \$7.98 million, which would be exchanged for 4,239 acres of the Pilot Hill parcel, appraised at \$8 million. According to the analysis, the proposed exchange fulfills management objectives of the Wyoming Board of Land Commissioners by increasing annual revenue, improving manageability by consolidating ownership, and improving access and recreational opportunities for the public. The analysis has been in development since June of 2018. Meanwhile, citizens, businesses and other organizations have donated more than \$1,000,000 toward access and infrastructure development.

According to a draft use plan released in January, the Pilot Hill parcel would feature non-motorized recreational trails mostly on a northern recreation zone and connecting to the Medicine Bow National Forest to the east. The southern portion of the property would be managed with a primary focus on conserving critical habitat for elk, mule deer and pronghorn.

Comments are also welcome in writing at: Attention Jessica Murkin, Office of State Lands and Investments – 122 W. 25th Street, Herschler Building 1W, Cheyenne, WY 82002 or by email at jessica.murkin@wyo.gov. The public comment period will end on June 3, 2020.

Legal/Statutory Authority:

N/A

Budget/Fiscal Information:

N/A

Responsible Staff:

Darren Parking, Natural Resources Manager, dparkin@cityofaramie.org

Janine Jordan, City Manager, jjordan@cityofaramie.org

Todd Feezer, Assistant City Manager: tfeezer@cityofaramie.org

Attachments:

Pilot Hill Support Letter 5.5.20