

MINUTES
CITY OF GLENWOOD SPRINGS
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2005
101 W. 8TH STREET
6:30 P.M.

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Mayor Larry Emery

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Richardson, David Merritt, Chris McGovern, Joe O'Donnell, Bruce Christensen, and Larry Beckwith.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Hecksel, City Manager; Karl Hanlon, City Attorney; Robin Unsworth, City Clerk; Andrew McGregor, Director of Community Development; and Terry Wilson, Police Chief.

ITEM NO. 7 Update on Roan Plateau. (BLM Planner Greg Goodenow and Steve Smith)

Steve Bennett, BLM, presented flipchart information on the Roan Plateau. He informed everyone that there is a public comment period until March 4, 2005. BLM has come up with five alternatives and he hit the key highlights of each alternative.

Alternative I would be to manage the plateau as it is now. Currently, 29,000 acres are available for leasing which are lands predominantly below the ledge and 18,000 of those acres are now leased and undergoing development. The lands are open now for travel management and winter timing restrictions are in place. Restrictions state that development can't take place for about 5 months of the year.

Alternative II includes four areas that are considered critical areas of environmental concern designation that are special administrative designations to protect the resource values. Two areas of these areas are on top of the plateau. There would be 52,000 acres for gas leasing with 21,000 acres for wilderness management. The lands would be open for travel management and would be subject to the winter timing restrictions.

Alternative III, preferred alternative by BLM, defers leasing on the top of the Plateau until 80% of drilling below is complete. BLM predicts that this alternative will postpone leasing of the top by 10-16 years. This alternative will continue to protect ecological, visional and recreational spots. It proposes only two ACEC's and watershed management area to protect botanical and watersheds on top.

Councilor Beckwith asked Mr. Bennett to explain why Alternative III is BLM's preferred alternative.

Mr. Bennett stated that BLM believes it is in the middle of the five. It's highpoint being the deferred leasing.

Alternative IV makes all lands available for leasing. There are two critical areas of environmental concern on top. It states that the watershed management area would be limited to Traver Creek. The alternative includes no management for the wilderness characteristics and travel would be limited to designated spots only.

Alternative V allows for management for a full array of activities emphasizing mineral development.

Mr. Bennett extended an invitation to the Council to be a cooperating agency. This would allow them to have more input into the final plan beyond the March 5th input cut-off date.

Councilor McGovern asked what they are asking for with Council being a cooperating agency. She asked if this included staff help or a letter of recommendation from Council.

Mr. Bennett replied, at this point he is merely encouraging Council to write in comments to help them with drafting a final plan. BLM will be sharing the results of the public comments with the cooperating agencies.

Councilor Richardson stated that it seems very unfortunate that there is a need or desire to save the top of the Roan Plateau to where we adults can enjoy it but once our children are in high school, they will not be able to. He feels that this is a case of poor management.

Councilor Merritt stated that this land was managed by the Department of Energy as a national oil reserve. It was later transferred to BLM because they didn't want to try to manage out here.

Mr. Bennett agreed and added that BLM was directed by the Department of Energy to lease a certain amount of that land within one year from the transfer of land. This land included the area below between Rifle and Parachute.

Councilor Merritt asked what the timeline would be after the public comment period and what the involvement of the City would be as a cooperating agency.

Mr. Bennett replied that they would be looking to release the final plan for protest by October of 2005. By having the cooperating agency status, it gives the City the ability to be more involved with BLM in the final decisions.

Councilor Christensen asked if BLM could protect this land like any other lands that they manage if they would like. He noted that the Roan Plateau is no different from any other piece of BLM land.

Mr. Bennett stated that he is correct.

Mayor Emery asked if there were any other comments. Since there were none, he thanked Mr. Bennett for his presentation.

Steve Smith, 63 116 Road, representing the Save the Roan Plateau Campaign, stated that the committee has been studying the Roan Plateau for the last 4 years. He would like Council's help in coming up with a plan to be able to have the Roan Plateau supply the gas that is needed and, at the same time, preserve the land. The Roan Plateau is a remarkable place. Not only visually, but it is one of the most productive lands for hunting, bringing in more than four million dollars a year to Garfield County. He believes that the BLM is trying hard to come up with a solution to protect the wildlife, the watersheds, and the beauty and at the same time retrieve the maximum amount of gas, but he doesn't believe that any of the alternatives that they are presenting are the right solution. He showed some photos of when gas drilling first began in Garfield County 8 years ago with just a few gas wells and showed pictures of projections of 10-20 years from now with an estimation of 10,000 gas wells in this area. Mr. Smith stated that BLM has conducted a thorough study of the effects on the Plateau. Some of the impacts include the mule deer herd

population, which would diminish by 1/3. The industrial nature of drilling on the top would drive away recreational opportunity and specifically, Alternative III, does not protect the top.

The Campaign believes there is another plan that would allow a better plan to upholding scenic values, preserving recreation, and at the same time produce a great amount of gas. This is the Community Alternative and it includes no drilling on the top, ever. No leasing on the top throughout the life of the plan of twenty years or defer leasing on top until technology enhances to where you will be able to get the gas without drilling the top. Meanwhile, strengthening the other stipulations on streams, watersheds, habitats and sensitive plants and making it one plan. They have drafted a model resolution that they presented to Mayor Emery.

Councilor Merritt asked Mr. Smith to verify the deferring time that they are proposing.

Mr. Smith stated that directional drilling has drastically improved in the last four years. If that much improvement could take place in four years, imagine what they would be able to do in twenty. He went on to say that the BLM 's draft plan projects that a threshold of 2,400 wells have to be in place before they lease the top and were looking at 10-16 years. The Committee carefully studied the analysis of drilling trends and permits granted by states and believes that they will hit the 2,500 holes within 8 years. He also added that 85% or more that is projected to be drilled is already coming from the bottom.

Councilor Merritt noted that they are proposing a permanent prohibition of drilling on the top.

Councilor Richardson asked where Council stands. He would like to move on this resolution although it was just handed to them. He offered Council to put it on the next agenda or make a motion now to support the resolution.

Councilor O'Donnell said he would like to wait until February 3rd when they can get input from the gas industry.

Councilor Beckwith said he would like to see Council support one of the alternatives, rather than the resolution that the Committee is offering.

Councilor Christensen stated that he is not comfortable adopting the resolution. He doesn't want to listen to the gas industry; it doesn't really affect Glenwood Springs. He would like to take some sort of action this evening and move forward with discussions.

Councilor O'Donnell wants to listen to the gas industry and what kind of equipment they have.

Councilor Merritt would like to consider joining other governments to become a cooperating agency.

Councilor Christensen feels very strongly that there is a resource that needs to be protected. He was recently at the Capitol where State Representatives are very concerned with what is going on. Property owners are having their land stripped from them. He stated that Council owes it to the people to protect this land until better technology is developed.

Councilor Richardson asked if he was going to make a motion to put it on the February 3, 2005 agenda. He is fully behind protecting this resource.

Mayor Emery stated that a resolution could be discussed at the next meeting.

Councilor Beckwith moved for Council to recommend, through the process of hearing, that Council support Alternative II.

The motion failed due to the lack of a second.

Mayor Emery said he doesn't feel anything has changed since Council has always supported saving the top of the plateau. It is a public resource and there is no reason to drill the top of the Roan Plateau. He encouraged Council to take the same stance as they have always had and that is to protect the top. He had a presentation from Encana a week ago and they stated that they would be drilling 300 in the next year. He doesn't believe it will take even eight years to hit the amount of wells to trigger drilling on the top.

Councilor Merritt stated that the cooperating entities of Rifle, Parachute and Garfield County have not made a recommendation yet. He would like everyone to study the RMP.

Bob Millette and his Wife, Maggie Pederson, 0116 Deer Park Court, Glenwood Springs, stated that New Castle voted to support the Community Resolution. He stated that the Roan Plateau is a unique area and is one of Colorado's biologically diverse places. It's home to some of the most unique & rare species of plants, and has one of the purest streams for cutthroat trout. It's deep canyons and high waterfalls attract hikers, photographers, hikers, etc. He would not like to see this area ruined in order to make a few people a profit. This is public land is for the public. Mr. Millette believes that Alternative III would destroy this land. BLM states in their EIS that this Alternative will substantially damage wildlife habitat on the Roan Plateau and went on to state statistics taken from the RMP. He encouraged Council to support the Community Alternative. He closed by saying that he is representing the Roaring Fork Sierra Club and the Ferdinand Haden Trout Unlimited Group.

Dean Moffatt, 326 22nd Street, told Council that Garfield County is a sacrifice zone to national energy policies. He reiterated that people's lives are being ruined, aquifers are being polluted, ranching is being shut down, and hunting and fishing is being destroyed. He would like to see the Glenwood Springs Council take a stand and support the Community Alternative to preserve the Roan Plateau.

Jamie Sturgill, 1140 Sunset Lane, El Jebel, stated that 94% of the public lands are already open to drilling. He believes that the future will bring technology to be able to extract the gas without drilling on the top. The impacts of turning the Roan Plateau into an industrialized area will be a long-term negative impact that will be irreversible. He asked Council to please prohibit drilling on the top.

Councilor McGovern moved, seconded by Councilor Merritt, to become a cooperating agency with the BLM.

Council registered their votes on the electronic lighting system. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilor Christensen moved, seconded by Councilor Beckwith, that the City take an official position to oppose drilling and leasing on top of the Plateau, period.

Councilor Richardson stated that the resolution that was given to them includes more than just no drilling on the top. He would like to see Council take a stronger stand.

Councilor Christensen said that becoming a cooperating agency would allow Council to be more active in the future while the final draft is considered. This motion allows them to take a stand on the fundamental issue.

Councilor O'Donnell wants to wait until the next meeting in order to hear from gas industry representatives.

Councilor Merritt echoed and wants it put off until the next meeting. He would like to go over the RMP and see where Garfield County stands at their February 2nd meeting.

Mayor Emery stated that they are not considering a new resolution but are reaffirming the same position from a few years ago.

Council registered their votes on the electronic lighting system. The results were:

AYES: Beckwith, Christensen, Emery, McGovern and Richardson

NAYS: O'Donnell and Merritt

The motion passed.