

**COUNCIL PRE-MEETING**  
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 5:30 p.m.  
Casper City Hall - Council Meeting Room

AGENDA

1. Downtown Open Container
2. Agenda Review

Mayor Freel began the pre-meeting session at 5:36 p.m. with Councilmembers Engebretsen, Gamroth, Johnson, Knell, Lutz, Pacheco, Pollock and Mayor Freel in attendance. Absent: Cathey.

Councilmember Pollock recused herself from the discussion and left the room.

City Manager Napier spoke briefly about the downtown open container area that was established last year and how this could be offered again this summer. He requested further information from Chief McPheeters.

Police Chief McPheeters indicated that the open container area was barely used last year, in large part due to the COVID pandemic. Councilmember Knell had questions about the cost and ability of the Police Department to staff the open container area. Chief McPheeters said that staffing of the open container area will need to be adaptable, that the costs involved will need to be monitored, and that he may return to Council if the staffing cost becomes a budget issue.

Carla Mills-Laatsch, Licensing Specialist, provided further detail on the requirements for the open container area and addressed questions presented by City Manager Napier and Council. Questions involved the marking of the area boundaries, the application process, the duration of the open container permit, and the use of wristbands. City Attorney Henley indicated that if the City provided the required wristbands to participating businesses, that the cost of the wristbands could be charged to the businesses.

Chief McPheeters pointed out that individual liquor establishments should have specific wrist bands so that if there are issues, the matter can be researched. Councilmember Lutz asked about the use of a standard cup. Chief McPheeters spoke about the use of a standard cup being another control feature.

Councilmember Engebretsen asked about the overall purpose and function of the open container area which Chief McPheeters addressed. Ms. Mills-Laatsch also indicated that the ordinance regarding the open container is very flexible and allows Council a lot of options regarding the timing and number of nights the open container area is allowed. Council discussed the hours and number of days the open container area should be allowed. Chief McPheeters indicated that Police staff could not cover an open container area every night of the summer, and reminded everyone that specific establishments who are holding a special event can still have a permit for the specific time of their event.

Mayor Freel suggested that the standard days for the open container area be Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights perhaps from 5 p.m. to midnight or 2 a.m., and other nights would require a special permit. Councilmember Gamroth suggested the area be open until midnight rather than 2 a.m. Chief McPheeters urged Council to not extend the open container area past midnight because of the limited participation at that time as well as the budget costs due to staff the time. Councilmember Lutz requested that three Sunday evenings be added to accommodate the Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day holidays.

Mayor Freel summarized that the open container area would run Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights with three additional Sunday nights for the discussed holidays and the hours would be from 5 p.m. to midnight. Council then discussed the streets to be included in the area. Mayor Freel requested extending the boundary on West Yellowstone west one block from Elm to Oak to include the concert area in the old Stalkups parking lot. City Manager Napier indicated that a special meeting will be needed to make the necessary changes in effect for the Memorial Day weekend.

Councilmember Pollock returned to the meeting.

City Manager Napier shared that Councilmember Engebretsen would be introducing an amendment this evening that would address neighbors that take up the on-street parking in front of multiple houses, and he cited an example where one neighbor had eleven vehicles parked in the street. He stated that amending the parking manual during the Council meeting would accommodate a permit process which would help neighbors manage extreme cases of abuse, but the matter could be tabled if Council wished to discuss this further. Councilmember Gamroth asked about the permitting process and City Manager Napier shared that a home owner could simply request the permit. Councilmember Knell asked about restricting use of the public street for parking. City Attorney Henley said that the City has an obligation to keep streets open for the use of the public, that there are public safety issues with how these vehicles are parked, and that this type of parking issue can actually decrease property values.

Mayor Freel adjourned the pre-meeting at 6:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY OF CASPER, WYOMING  
A Municipal Corporation

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Fleur Tremel  
City Clerk

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Steven K. Freel  
Mayor