

April 26, 2022

Town of Mammoth Lakes
Mayor Lynda Salcido
Mayor Pro Tem John Wentworth
Councilmember Bill Sauser
Councilmember Kirk Stapp
Councilmember Sarah Rea

By Email to Town Clerk

RE: Town Council Special Meeting of April 27, 2022
Item 4.2; Preliminary Capital Improvement Program Project and Budgets

Mayor Salcido and Council,

Please accept these as constructive comments on Town staff's Preliminary CIP Program. My experience tells me something provided in writing allows for more clarity and time for review. As this is only a Preliminary CIP, the timing appears appropriate. As to my suggestions, they are meant to enhance the Town's efforts on behalf of the community as a whole, not solely just my personal preference. As an example, I don't have a dog right now, so I wouldn't frequent a dog park. And a cat park? Might be fun to watch, but..... no. Of course, it has not been possible for me to keep up on everything, certainly I have no insight into recent staff discussions - so if I've missed something or state 'the obvious' - well, oops - and please move past 'obvious' or 'ill-informed' comments! The numbers refer to the table in the presentation materials.

For your thoughtful consideration:

1. 60 Joaquin Housing Project: Good progress. It appears the process used has been working to this point. This approach, tweaked if necessary based on lessons learned, should prove effective in the future when other properties become available.
8. Parcel Infrastructure Grant (IIG): Pacific is one of the most experienced and involved developers in the west and has a solid grasp on the best use of these funds. We need to continue to rely on our Partnership.
9. Parcel Phase II Support: This has been anticipated for some time and the Town is encouraged to continue to find creative ways to meet this need. And start thinking about Phase III and beyond!
10. Chaparral Road Extension - Parcel: Town staff has long stressed the need to identify sources of funding to support the overall program. Every dollar found to fund infrastructure leaves more funds to provide housing units. The funds identified for Chaparral will free up other funds to create a home for someone. In addition, getting this critical piece of infrastructure in place now will go a long way toward The Parcel becoming a vital part of the Mammoth community.
11. Parking Lot - Parcel: I've said this before, so I will keep this brief: I suggest we let Phase I and II play out before building additional parking. Plan for it, sure. But build it - I would not. We need to support the Walk Bike Ride approach for our entire community in the long term. Once a parking lot is in place, it will be difficult to remove. It may be a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' to concede this too early. As in a 'spare' drawer, an 'empty' closet, or 'free' space in a large garage - if you build it - it will fill up.

12. Childcare – Parcel: This is critical to the community as a whole, not just The Parcel, and, if anything, should be expanded in other phases on site and elsewhere (see Item 38). With IMACA's recent funding issues, additional support may be warranted. With the closing of the facility at the school, how many students will likely move to The Parcel? And, of course, how many spaces might then remain that will be available for Parcel residents?
13. Public Park – Parcel: Great to see substantial funding has been identified. Again, other funding for this means more homes sooner. It will be good to see how the amenities in this location might be complimentary to other parks in Town. They each have their own character and expected uses. It should be kept in mind that this will be the most central, the most accessible, park in Town. It will try to serve much more than solely The Parcel. If at all possible, get it done in one phase! Please keep in mind the numbers it will serve: Imagine a (very realistic) look ahead to 2030: The Town population has 'swelled' to 9,000 year round residents. The Parcel is built out. There are 1,500 full-time year-round residents in The Parcel. The Parcel 'population' represents One of every Six Town residents. The Park at the Parcel should be designed for that eventuality. As to another related recreational amenity at The Parcel: "Tanner Rill" or "Mill Ditch" or "Diaper Forest Creek" – the name is not critical, but working to enhance this area as an amenity for the community should happen now (perhaps it is happening!!?). The Parcel Team and Town management has been provided with a number of thoughts previously. The plan can involve MUPs, trails, connectivity to other neighborhoods, passive recreation, interpretive opportunities, and other ideas.
14. ARFF/SRE Building – Airport: As this much-needed project moves forward, it is critical that the Town continue to stress with FAA the need for discretionary funding. FAA funds will be needed to support ongoing efforts at the airport in other areas. FAA has been a great partner for many years. There have also been actions taken in the form of congressional legislation that have been critical and, frankly, unexpected. Three separate CARES/Covid-related bills have resulted in over \$3 million being directed to the Town in support of Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) from 2020 to the present. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), passed in December 2021, has resulted in an additional commitment of over \$2 million toward capital projects. We could find a suitable way to recognize the FAA (and others) for that level of funding, while continuing to stress the need for ongoing support. Over \$5 million unanticipated in a short timespan!
21. Trail and Municipal Signage: When the Main Street Sidewalk project was underway, it was discussed how to enhance the signage and 'street furniture' along Main Street and the frontage roads. The plan was to walk the length of the area, identifying possibilities to better relate the new sidewalk to area businesses and pedestrian connectivity. That effort fell victim to changing priorities over the past two years. Suggest it be revisited (if it is not already part of the plan, which it may be), especially considering Items 18, 22 and 23.
27. 2021 Streets and MUP Rehabilitation: It was great to hear your Engineering Manager's update on April 20. As a resident of Mountain Boulevard, I can say we will appreciate the rehab. We were also excited to hear the Town is working with Amerigas on extending underground service to Mountain Blvd. There are many full-time, year-round Amerigas customers on this street. On a serious safety note, our propane tanks were on the critical fire hazard list during the 2016/17 winter – with assistance required to dig them out!

31. CRC Interior Improvements: Suggest fundraising for future amenities and upgrades should continue. There will always be a need!
32. Town Hall: The only suggestion here is to ensure the selected design team and Town staff spend time with Mono County to gain all the knowledge they can from County lessons learned. The County had to face, among other things, significant budget and schedule constraints that no doubt affected decision making and the final product.

Closing Comments – much of this may appear ‘obvious’ – but it needs to be said regardless:

A. Overarching comments related to Items 1 through 7

Initiative: When Housing Now!, then unnamed, began many months ago, it was a somewhat ‘shotgun’ approach. It appears to move closer to a ‘program’ with every new action and it is expected the Housing Now! initiative will evolve and that it will be able to adjust as needs change. It is suggested that before launching follow-up projects to those underway, the Town and its partners should take time to assess each one – taking stock as to what has been learned, the effectiveness of each and, of course, what can be improved upon or added to the program. When the next opportunity arises, care should be taken to appropriately assess how that opportunity fits in with the overall vision. Housing ‘solutions’ will always be ‘interim’ – there will always be a need.

Funding: It is great to see the recent commitment of funds toward housing, as our housing crisis is a critical roadblock to the future viability of the community. It is suggested efforts to secure a long-term, sustainable funding source continue. A couple of years of solid funding are great and we have been fortunate to have revenues that have allowed this to happen, but funding sustainability will be critical moving forward.

Major Future Needs/Opportunities: Efforts to identify and acquire land for additional long term housing efforts must continue, including just about any undeveloped land that might be suitable from a planning and environmental standpoint. Not just ‘available’ land within the current Town boundary. Let’s work with Mono County, the United States Forest Service and others to identify opportunities for the long term. The fact these efforts might not come to fruition for many years should not at all dissuade the Town and its partners from starting down this path. There are plenty of examples around Town that demonstrate these things take time. The Town and its partners should engage in a continual effort to keep the effort moving. Examples, public and private: (A) Snowcreek: Began planning in the 70s, entitlements took years, and based on the original unit count, they are approximately halfway there. Forty years and not nearly complete. (B) The Parcel: This started many years ago, involved public and private entities’ land transfers, local, State and Federal agencies. Twenty-five years plus. (C) Permanent home for “ice rink”: This has been included in planning documents and Town priorities since incorporation in 1984. Forty years. (D) North Village Specific Plan: Has involved a number of private parties for many years, with expectations for the ‘next big project’ almost annually. Twenty years plus with much to be done. (E) MMSA: We look forward to MMSA/Alterra developing properties in a responsible fashion. Eagle Lodge? Temporary tent is in good shape after over twenty years. Canyon Lodge? Significant funds/effort went into the recent remodel. Main Lodge? I did not look up when the concept of the Land Exchange began, but it was many years ago.

The point is – these things take time. Decades. They survive Acts of Congress, natural disasters, recessions, booms – and busts, Climate Change, major changes to the players. All those things are reality. But we cannot possibly get there unless we start.....

B. Overarching comments related to items 8 through 13, The Parcel:

The Parcel is currently our only opportunity to provide a significant (450) number of units. Who knows when the next opportunity will reveal itself? We must make the most of it by:

- Maintain a sense of urgency. The availability of State and Federal Funds for affordable housing is in a great spot right now. ‘Strike while the iron is hot.’
- Maintain the outstanding relationship we have with our partner, Pacific. It is certainly a contractual relationship, but it is much more than that. We are building a community together.
- Maintain the vision. It is not “construct 450 affordable units to relieve the worst of our housing crisis.” Instead, it is “Provide 450 affordable homes in the Town of Mammoth Lakes that will enable a variety of residents, from singles to families with children, with a quality, safe environment in which to live.” The community as a whole stands to benefit, including residents, businesses, agencies, extended families, friends and neighbors.
- To the extent permissible, find ways in which all five Town Council members can participate in policy discussions on housing. As an example, when a funding opportunity presents itself, it is more than cumbersome that the full Council cannot discuss a basic question such as this example: Should the funds go to build four units on an open lot, or should the funds go toward expediting XX numbers of units in The Parcel?

C. Comments on - What’s missing from the Preliminary CIP?

- a. Airport: In the final CIP, it is suggested more of the airport long term improvements be included (as discussed in previous ACIP presentations).
- b. Woodman Street turnaround and alternatives?
- c. Future phases of the Signage and Wayfinding program, including ‘monument’ at Old Mammoth Road/Main Street intersection.

Thanks again for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Grady Dutton

Mammoth Lakes Resident/Homeowner/Taxpayer/Constituent/Business Owner