

Carson tax investment advances

Vote on boost awaits three public hearings

By John Barrette

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Financing of capital projects with \$15 million in bonds moved a step closer to reality for Carson City when the Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 on Thursday for a public hearing of the expenditure process.

The actual financing, however, won't come until well into 2014 if it passes with four votes after two town hall hearings and a third public meeting on the plan of expenditure; the latter is set for Feb. 20. Then or soon after, barring glitches along the way on the capital improvement plans, voting on a one-eighth-of-a-penny city sales-tax hike would come to underpin the bonded indebtedness.

"What this comes down to is investment," said Linda Ritter, former city manager, as she touted the various projects. They are downtown, North and South Carson Street and East William Street business corridor city-scape upgrades, and partial financing for a multi-purpose athletic center (MAC) and new animal shelter.

PROJECTS, A5

Werner out the door with many thanks

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Larry Werner isn't Carson City's city manager anymore.

He exited that role to enter retirement Thursday, running the show during his last Board of Supervisors meeting, at which he was thanked profusely by board members and staff colleagues. Mayor Robert Crowell presented him a framed proclamation lauding years of service to the



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Now-former City Manager Larry Werner receives a plaque for his retirement from Mayor Robert Crowell on Thursday.

WERNER, A5

PROJECTS

From page A1

"These things have been around for 10 years," Ritter said. She went back to her tenure at City Hall, when Envision Carson City predated the Great Recession in recounting downtown plans because the bypass freeway was proceeding. Pressure built has since as bypass completion looms.

Prospects for eventual approval of the one-eighth-of-a-penny city sales-tax hike, however, still could hang in the balance as the public provides input during the town halls and at the Feb. 20 board meeting. Supervisor John McKenna previously said he prefers a vote of the people to raise the tax. Supervisor Jim Shirk wanted more public input and said after Thursday vote that his final decision will come after he gets that next year.

The nudge toward approval of the ambitious capital-projects package came on the last day Larry Werner held the city manager post, a final victory for staffers work on his watch before his retirement. Werner told the board the projects were likely the best use for the final one-eighth of a cent in sales-tax authority they can exercise without a vote of the people. Even then, of course, it requires that supermajority of four votes.

Nor did the plan agree with everyone, though most who testified before Thursday's tally were behind it.

Carson City's Fred Voltz, for example, opposed the tax hike and questioned the wisdom of building a new Animal Services shelter when there are various empty buildings available for adaptive reuse. He also questioned the MAC and cityscape funding aspects.

Other proponents testified that converting some warehouse wouldn't do for an animal shelter, but most of them preferred to focus on the overall package instead. Lisa Schuette of the Carson Animal Shelter Initiative cited the value of all the projects, for example, though she

obviously wanted the new shelter among them.

Among others favoring the projects moving into to the public hearings phase were Garrett Lepire, Dana Lee Fruend and Doreen Mack, all of them with business interests. The latter two are with Downtown 20/20, the lead group pushing cityscape changes and continual advocates of narrowing downtown Carson Street traffic to one lane north and one south.

"We don't have time to spare on this," said Mack, founder of the 20/20 group, as she joined others in saying downtown-revitalization is needed with the bypass taking traffic away from Carson Street. She and others feel something must be done to make Carson City a destination point.