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City General Plan to get once-over

TWENTYNINE PALMS — After nearly two years of deliberation and study, the Twentynine Palms City Council on Tuesday, Oct. 28 gave unanimous approval to move forward with a comprehensive update of the city's General Plan.

The update, according a consultant working for the city, will likely cost somewhere under \$1 million.

Nelson Miller, speaking on behalf of planning firm Hogle-Ireland Inc., which provides community development services to the city, presented his findings to the City Council regarding a recent study of the General Plan, noting that only piecemeal work had been done on specific elements of the plan over the past several years.

He reminded city officials that all elements of the plan are interdependent, explaining how changes to the land use element can affect housing and housing changes can affect circulation. He also emphasized the need for a complete overview.

Miller's recommendations, which were later turned into a motion by Councilman Joel Klink, included directing city staff to initiate a comprehensive update of the General Plan, and requesting Hogle-Ireland to prepare for City Council consideration a proposal to update the plan and prepare an environmental impact report to address implementation and coordination of programs already engaged in by the city.

Referring to initial research conducted by City Manager Michael Tree, Miller said the cost of typical general plan updates throughout California have averaged \$1.2 million.

Miller then indicated that the Twentynine Palms update would probably come in "somewhere under a million," considering that "much of the work is already done," including the forthcoming Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and recent work by consultant Frank Spevecak and consulting firm RSG related to reviewing the vision and build-out population of the General Plan, identification of natural resources to be protected, and input from community workshops and a survey conducted in May 2008.

Funding for the General Plan update would come from the city's reserves, which are adequate, according to Tree, who said, "We have seen an increase in reserves from \$5 million to \$7.5 million in the last two years."

Mayor pro tem Steve Spear cited a December 2006 Specific Plan workshop with facilitator Norm King, who said: "The city's reserves are sacred, meant for specific purposes."

One of those purposes, Spear said, "is to ensure the city's plan is intact ... to preserve the quality of life for our children's and grandchildren's future."

While the time frame for preparing a comprehensive update is usually 18 to 24 months, Miller indicated that the Twentynine Palms General Plan update could conceivably take less time, although he advised the council that it would take "at least 12 months."

Hogle-Ireland is one of the major firms in the state for preparing General Plans and is currently developing plans for the cities of Desert Hot Springs and Hesperia.

The firm has provided planning assistance to the city of Twentynine Palms for various projects since its incorporation, including preparation of the city's Development Code and providing the current interim community development director.

For more information about the General Plan update, see pages 11 to 21 of staff report 10-28-2008 on the city's Web site, www.ci.twenty-nine-palms.ca.us

or call the Interim Community Development Director Bulmaro Canseco at 367-6799.

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