



Casper City Council Approves New \$5.3 Million Lodge For Hogadon

By [Tom Morton](#) May 3, 2016 11:05 PM



Tom Morton, Townsquare Media

Jonathan Taylor wants to make memories with his children like most parents, he told [Casper City Council on Tuesday](#).

But he can't at the Hogadon Ski Area because its dilapidated lodge is handicap-inaccessible.

"The most difficult thing about being in this (wheelchair) situation is not being able to do the things that you want to do with your family because of inaccessibility," Taylor said.

Taylor has lived in Casper since he was in the fifth grade, and was paralyzed and wheelchair-bound since an accident 16 years ago when his first daughter was five weeks old, he said. "I've always vowed I would never let the situation that happened to me stop me from doing the things that I want to do."

He was among six people who urged city council to approve the contract with GH Phipps Construction of Wyoming to build the new \$5.3 million lodge at the Hogadon Ski Area.

The planning has been in the works for years, especially after a 2013 study outlining the need for a year-round lodge for skiers and non-skiers alike, City Manager V.H. McDonald said.

McDonald cited a variety of problems with the aging A-frame lodge, at least for the part of it that has not been condemned: inadequate restrooms, inadequate office space, lack of proximity to the lifts, a deteriorating foundation, a cafeteria that gets so crowded people sometimes sit on the floor to eat, an occasionally leaky roof, noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the total dismal experience of all these that discourages people from returning to central Wyoming's only place for Alpine skiing.

The funding for the project, initially set at \$6 million, is already in the bank from excess revenues from the Optional One-Percent Sales Tax No. 14, he said.

That funding, McDonald and other lodge supporters added, comes from funding for capital projects and not part of the approximately \$140 million operations budget for the city. The city has been hard hit in its operations budget with declining sales tax revenues in the crashing energy economy.

For Taylor, the numbers — dollars, economics, tourists, Hogadon users — pale compared to the ADA noncompliance. That infant of his who was five-weeks old now competes on the Kelly Walsh High School ski team, and his son skis with a team Hogadon.

"I travel every weekend to drop both my kids up there, and I wave to them from the parking lot because that's as far as I can go," he said, his voice cracking.

He and his family will drive hundreds of miles to the western part of the state to ski at Grand Targhee because that ski area has handicap access, he said. "I've not skied with them here."

He wants to have the memories with his children like most people do, Taylor said. "I want to ski with them. I want to enjoy what it's like to go down that hill with my children. Currently I can't do that."

A new lodge at Hogadon will go far to enhance the quality of life in Casper, he said.

City council approved it on a 9-0 vote.