

Council may pay about \$5.3 million for new Hogadon Lodge

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File | Star-Tribune

Taylor Rowe, 10, gets a ski lesson from her father, Kirt, in January 2013 at Hogadon Ski Area on Casper Mountain. The Casper City Council may approve a bid for construction on a new ski lodge at its Tuesday meeting.

A Laramie construction company could soon start building the new multi-million dollar Hogadon Lodge, with plans to finish by August 2017.

Casper's City Council will vote on an agreement for GH Phipps Construction of Wyoming to build the Hogadon Lodge at its meeting Tuesday night. The total amount of the project, including alternate ideas and a construction contingency account, is about \$5.3 million.

The new lodge would include a viewing area, a catering area, conference rooms, equipment rental, areas for the Casper Mountain Racers and the Casper Mountain Snow Sports School, as well as a bar, according to city documents. The lodge's architects estimated earlier that the project would cost about \$6.3 million.

Casper Leisure Services director Doug Follick said that the estimate was made before the bust, and that companies are more likely to take less money for projects during the downturn.

"The contractors see with the bust coming that there will probably be less projects that will get funded," Follick said.

Casper Mountain Racers coach Aaron Flynn said the new lodge can make Hogadon a more family-friendly place.

"That's our goal, to keep more families involved with skiing," he said.

Six Wyoming companies bid for the job. The base bid from GH Phipps for just under \$5 million was the lowest. Hedquist Construction, the company of former Casper city council member Craig Hedquist, sent in the highest base bid. It was almost \$6.4 million.

While the Council is voting on the agreement Tuesday night, the money has been allocated for quite some time.

About a year ago, council members agreed to use \$6 million from Optional 1-Cent Sales Tax money for the new lodge. Though the agreement comes at a time when the city is navigating a downturn and a sales tax shortfall and offering 53 employees early retirement, Follick said the lodge replacement is necessary.

"It's a lot of money, but that lodge that's there, part of it was condemned," Follick said. "We couldn't use part of it. The building was so old that it needed to be replaced."

Follick said it was likely that it would open to the public around Thanksgiving of 2017.

Longtime skier Bob Kidd said he's coached the mountain racers for years and that he's helped with the Friends of Hogadon organization. He said he thinks the new lodge will be something that Casper can be proud of for the next century.

"It's just time," Kidd said.

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