



## **The Political Process for Building a Community Recreation Center**

By Leadership Steamboat, March 12, 2007

*The 2006-07 class of Leadership Steamboat presents its community forum Dialogue Before Decision. This forum is designed to encourage engaged and informed decision makers by connecting our community to information and purposeful dialogue on issues vital to the future of the Valley. Dialogue Before Decision wants to hear from you. What do you want to know about the Community Recreation Center issue? Please submit your questions, comments, and ideas to [dialoguebeforedecision@hotmail.com](mailto:dialoguebeforedecision@hotmail.com)*

Community Recreation Center is a hot topic in Steamboat Springs. Why hasn't it been built already?" "How do we move from the discussion phase of the process to making a decision?" The Steamboat Springs City Council has obviously determined there is some community desire for a recreation center. How the process moves forward is determined in part by Steamboat Springs Municipal Codes. In this article we discuss the political process for determining whether or not a Community Recreation Center will be built in our community.

Generally, a multimillion-dollar public project is funded through taxes or the borrowing of money, or both. The only way to impose a sales, use or income tax in Steamboat Springs or to authorize the city to borrow money, unless a specific exemption applies, is through a vote of the citizens, or ballot issue.

Recently, Leadership Steamboat visited with Julie Jordan, Steamboat Springs City Clerk. Ms. Jordan explained, while some alternative processes may exist, the Community Recreation Center issue will most likely be presented by the City Council as an ordinance thus inviting more public involvement. An ordinance requires two readings and a public hearing before a ballot issue is approved.

One other way a ballot issue can be brought forward is through an initiative or referendum. The public may submit a proposed ordinance to the City Council after obtaining the signatures of at least fifteen percent of the total number of electors. Fifteen percent would represent approximately 1,200 currently registered voters. Under any scenario, this issue may involve state constitutional and statutory requirements that dictate what questions can be presented and how.

Community involvement is consistent with the home rule system of government under which Steamboat Springs operates. According to the City Charter this philosophy "emphasizes popular involvement and encourages citizen participation in all matters of local and municipal concern."

According to Ms. Jordan, the issue was not placed on the ballot in November 2006 because City Council felt the critical questions had not yet been answered. Specific topics they would like to address prior to moving forward are cost, location, amenities, plans, and long-term operation costs.

In order to explore these questions, the City Council has created a Steamboat Springs Recreational Needs Exploratory Committee. The Committee will consist of ten members: two from Citizens for a Community Recreation Center, two from the Parks and Recreation Committee, one from the Old Town Hot Springs, one from the School District, one from the Rita Valentine Park Coalition, and three at-large. Applications for this Committee were due Friday, March 2, 2007. The Committee is authorized to make recommendations to the City Council.

The City Council has also contracted with Greenplay LLC, recreational facility consultants and Barker Rinker Seacat, an architectural firm to gather more information before the decision-making process.

The task at hand for the consultants is to work with various community members and build upon previous work to determine and recommend what type of facilities, if any, are appropriate for unmet recreational needs in Steamboat Springs. They anticipate reporting back to City Council by mid-April.

Next week we will be looking at the perceived need for a Community Recreation Center.