

City supports Measure A

By Drew Setterholm Daily Press Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, March 5, 2014 2:00 am

The Montrose City Council for a second time added its support to a referred measure on the April ballot, this time for measure “A,” an advanced telecommunications issue.

The council voted unanimously, sans absent mayor Judy Ann Files, to pass a resolution urging voters to support referred measure “A” that would establish the city’s right to provide advanced telecommunications services, including broadband, without increasing taxes.

Councilor Kathy Ellis introduced the issue and cast it as a matter of local control versus state government control. Ellis referred to a 2005 legislative action at the state level that required municipalities to gain public support before entering the public-private advanced telecommunications venue.

The council’s resolution states re-establishing this right could allow the city to partner with the private sector to provide benefits to the citizens in the form of new and improved services, increased jobs and ultimately lower costs.

“This legislation, in essence, considered that the manner in which local communities address their telecommunication needs is not a local issue but a statewide concern,” Ellis stated. “A ‘yes’ vote for referred measure ‘A’ returns control to our community on how the city of Montrose can best address our telecommunication needs for the future.”

Ellis said she saw several concerns with the state law preventing municipalities from expanding advanced telecommunications without public support.

“The fact that the state took control away from local entities, it needs to return to local entities to determine how to proceed with broadband,” she said. “I think this is a very important measure.”

Virgil Turner, director of innovation and citizen engagement for the city, provided details about how the city would proceed should the measure pass. Montrose could potentially expand the city’s infrastructure with fiber connectivity, which would allow private telecommunications providers access to greater markets and increased reach, a benefit for both city and county residents, he said.

Most importantly, the measure does not ask for any increased tax.

“Referred measure ‘A’ is a measure that will not increase taxes,” Turner said.

If passed, the city would embark on a four- to six-month process of public engagement to determine needs and also consider how to fund any expansion of infrastructure.

“The expansion of infrastructure in the city certainly will cost money, eventually, if that’s what

we choose,” Turner said. “The model of how that is paid back is yet to be determined. Once we work with the public to understand what will work best for Montrose, and if it requires spending above our budget limits, that would possibly come back to the voters at a later time. They would have a say if that was the case.”

Turner has worked with the issue at the regional level, as well as locally, and found support from residents.

“This is something that we’re hearing from the citizens that they want us to move forward on as fast as possible,” he said.

In other city business, the council appointed Steven Caldwell to a vacant position on the Parks Advisory Board and passed an ordinance authorizing the sale of property on Cerro Summit. The property will be conveyed to the Colorado Department of Transportation for \$4,850, and the department will restructure water infrastructure to remove the unattractive overhead above the road at the summit.

Assistant City Manager Rob Josef also announced the “early bird” discount for annual passes to Black Canyon Golf Course has been extended through Thursday, March 13.