

# The vote is in; what comes next?

By Drew Setterholm Daily Press Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, April 6, 2014 2:00 am

April 1 marked the end of campaigning for referred ballot measures A and B, as well as a city charter amendment and city council seats. The votes have been tallied and the results announced. What comes next is the sizable task of moving ahead on monumental projects in Montrose.

Measure A approved the city of Montrose's right to enter the telecommunications, cable and advanced services market. Measure B approved a 0.3 percent sales tax to support construction of a community recreation center. Both initiatives now move into planning and development phases.

Before any progress can be made on either of the measures, the April 1 election must be certified. Until Monday morning, the city's official canvassing board meeting, election results are still unofficial. At 10 a.m. on Monday, the city clerk, the city council mayor pro-tem and the municipal judge will convene to discuss, approve and certify the vote, making the results official.

Barring any unlikely change in the outcome of the vote, the city and the Montrose Recreation District will embark on the weeks, months and years of work that lie ahead regarding their respective ballot issues.

## Community Recreation Center

For Measure B, the community recreation center, one of the first steps toward constructing the new facility is implementing the sales tax attached to the measure. The 0.3 percent sales tax increase will begin June 1, according to the ballot language voters approved. City Clerk Lisa DelPiccolo explained an intergovernmental agreement between the city and the recreation district will be presented at the council's April 15 regular meeting, formally establishing the terms and life span of the temporary tax.

According to Montrose Recreation District Executive Director Ken Sherbenou, the district and its board of directors are ready to initiate work on several fronts simultaneously to advance the community recreation center project. The district must tackle capital fundraising, financing, detailed architectural planning and continue to engage the community to reach the final product.

The district's capital campaign was spelled out before the vote; it aims to raise \$1.3 million in grants and fundraising with help from the Montrose Recreation Foundation. Sherbenou said a Colorado common grant application has already been prepared, but needs updating before being submitted to several foundations and agencies.

Financing the construction of the facility is a major step for the district.

"I really think that the priority right now is shoring up that financing and making sure we get the best deal for Montrose that we possibly can," Sherbenou said.

Recent talks with the district's municipal finance firm, George K. Baum and Co., have indicated positive signs in terms of interest rates, Sherbenou said. Once a credit rating is in hand, the district and finance firm will issue certificates of participation in denominations of \$5,000 each to fund construction.

The district board will be a valuable asset in assisting with financing work; board members Jason Ullmann and Barbara Bynum make up the board's growth committee and will assist in finance work.

"I think initially, the two of us will be really involved working with G.K. Baum and working through the process of lining the district up for our credit rating and the subsequent sale of those certificates of participation," Bynum said.

Final designs for the center will be commissioned from the district's architect. The plans presented prior to the election were conceptual, not complete, Sherbenou explained. Final plans will take time and a significant financial investment, one the district could not make in good conscience before the measure passed a vote.

"We really wanted to make sure we had the full plan together, but we also didn't want to be presumptuous that it was going to pass," Sherbenou said.

Citizen engagement will continue to be a priority. Sherbenou said the district plans to assemble a Citizen CRC Oversight Committee of local experts and interested individuals to advise the district board. Invitations will be sent out and citizens may also contact Sherbenou to express interest.

A series of engagement meetings will also continue over the next several months leading to the final design of the recreation center.

All of these steps will likely span nine to 10 months, and groundbreaking on the center is projected for early 2015, Sherbenou said. An opening date would follow in late 2016, and a conversion of the current aquatic center into a turf field house would round out the project.

With a vote as close as April 1's passage of Measure B, Sherbenou acknowledged nearly as many people as were elated by the news were left feeling disappointed with the outcome; that should not prevent any individual from participating in the ongoing planning process or using the center when it opens, he said.

"It's just going to be such a benefit in so many different ways for the entire community, and we really want people to be looking forward to it," Sherbenou said.

### **Broadband and advanced services**

Measure A's passage has opened the door for community conversations on expanded broadband

access. The city's role, whether it be in constructing a citywide fiber optic network or working through public-private partnerships, will be explored in the coming months, according to City Director of Innovation and Citizen Engagement Virgil Turner.

"I think from the city's standpoint, we have questions that need to be answered, and once we know what those answers are, it will help us define the way this effort will start moving forward," Turner said.

The city has established a business owner survey to gauge the current level of broadband service in the city and the level of desire to increase that service. A broader survey directed to residents will follow shortly, Turner said.

The city's objective will be to harvest accurate data on what businesses and individuals want in terms of broadband connectivity; that data will lead to discussions of if and how the city can assist in moving that goal forward.

The wide margin of the vote, Turner said, speaks to citizens' feelings on the issue.

"Montrose feels that their needs are not being met as well as they could be; not that there aren't businesses trying to meet those needs, but their resources are limited, so it might be time for the city to look for ways to move this forward faster," he said.

By early this summer, Turner hopes to be organizing public meetings to discuss technical aspects of broadband and gigabit service, and the economic development that could follow. The city also has plans to use its current resources, and potential partnerships, to foster the conversation — that could include setting up public gigabit service areas for citizens to experience high bandwidth or educational events.

While the process to determine the city's role must be deliberate and conscious of private business's interests, Turner said the information gathering stage must lead steadily toward action.

"From what we've heard from the community, it's time to stop talking about it and get something done. ... We also need to move with deliberate action and we need to make sure that whatever we do, we do the right thing," Turner said.

The information gathering process can be facilitated by business owners, and eventually residents, filling out the city's survey ([mntrs.co/bbs](http://mntrs.co/bbs)) and attending public forums. Turner is also eager to meet with organizations in the community to exchange information and feedback.

"I'd love to have invites from groups that might be interested in hearing more about this and providing us with some insight on this," Turner said.

## **City council**

In the din of ballot initiatives, a new council member has quietly prepared to join the city's ranks.

Rex Swanson, who begins a four-year term as councilor in the District II seat, will be sworn in at the council's April 15 meeting at 6 p.m. Swanson takes over for former councilor Carol McDermott, who will be recognized for two terms of service as the mayor pro-tem.

The council will also be selecting a new mayor and mayor pro-tem at the meeting. Mayor Judy Ann Files was re-elected to her at-large council position and David Romero retained his District I position. A paper ballot and subsequent motion by the council will decide the new mayor.