

From Standard-Times

City Considers Lake Nasworthy Development Resort, Entertainment Options in Council's Hands

by Monique Ching | Dec 11, 2014

SAN ANGELO, Texas - A resort and entertainment destination area near Lake Nasworthy could take another step toward fruition, depending on a future City Council decision.

"We want to bring people out to the lake, but we don't want to displace locals," said AJ Fawver, the city's planning and development administrator.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board voted Thursday to recommend that the council give city staff the go-ahead to start seeking bids for concepts on the development.

The development was recommended in the Gateway Planning Group's Lake Nasworthy master development plan, which the council adopted in late 2013. The plan recommends a hotel, restaurant or entertainment venue for the 19½ acres at Mary E. Lee Park to enhance public access and minimize environmental impact.

"I'm glad to see the progress that has been made," said Louie Perez, chairman of the board.

Board member Gloria Henderson, however, was not so enthused about the proposed development at Mary E. Lee Park, in the 7000 block of Knickerbocker Road, and voted against any action to move the development forward.

"It may be a great and wonderful thing to have," Henderson said after Thursday's meeting, "but I think we have other things we need in Angelo worse than these, before we spend our moneys on that."

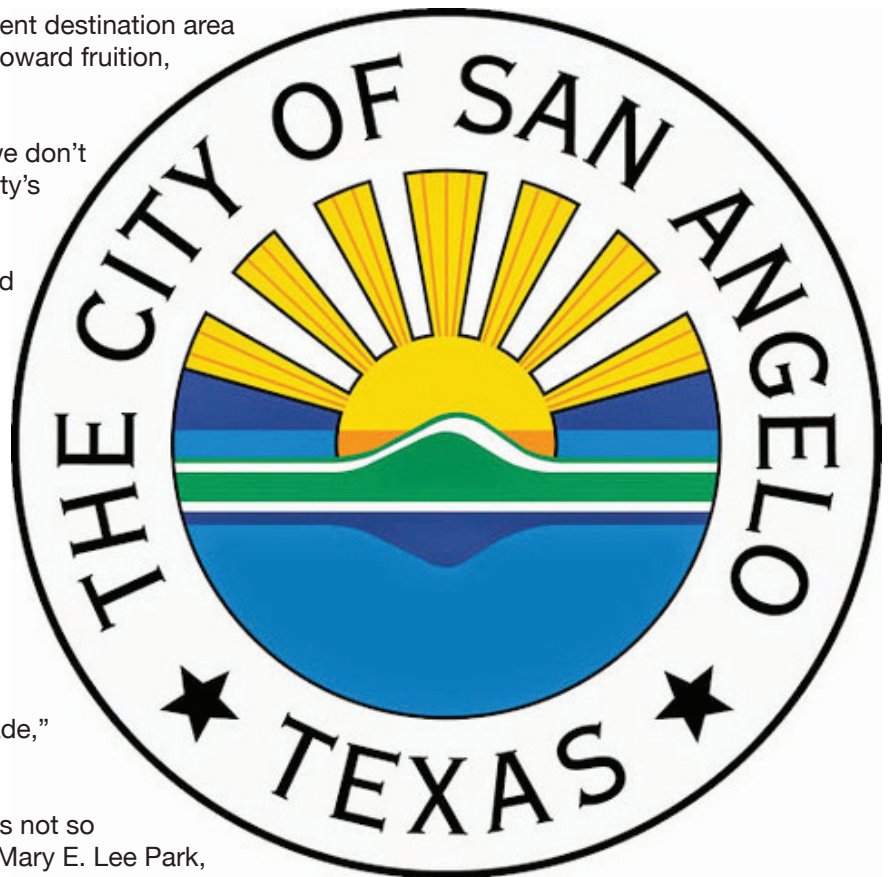
Lake Nasworthy could have a regional draw, Fawver said, citing Gateway's plan, but adding more amenities would make it more attractive to visitors from outside San Angelo.

"We need to leverage that," she said.

If the city sought proposals for concepts at Mary E. Lee Park, Fawver said, it would ask that the developer state how it can enhance the area to draw visitors while preserving its state for locals. The city also wants the developer to demonstrate how its plan can harmonize with existing neighborhoods, the environment and existing activities out there.

"The lack of activity is the main issue of that (area) taking off," Fawver said.

The Gateway plan also notes that Lake Nasworthy can be a draw for visitors who fly into San Angelo, Fawver said. When



visitors land at Mathis Field and drive into the city, Lake Nasworthy is the first area they see.

Gateway consultants noted, however, that visitors have to travel farther in town to find a restaurant, shop or hotel, and there aren't any amenities drawing them to Nasworthy.

"This is not something we're trying to move forward and enter lightly," Fawver said, giving lengthy details on legal requirements on the proposed public-private partnership — because the property is city-owned.

For such a partnership, the council must determine that requirements under the Texas Parks & Wildlife Code, Chapter 26, are met. This includes determination that there is "no feasible and prudent alternative" for the proposed developments and that the development involves all reasonable planning to minimize harm to the land. The latter includes public notices and public hearings.

The Parks and Recreation board voted 6-1 on all items pertaining to a recommendation for the council to authorize staff to seek proposals for a concept to develop this area at Lake Nasworthy.

If approved by the council, the city would go through the standard process in seeking proposals and vetting them through a committee.

"Rather than looking at a monetary figure or looking at a checklist of requirements, we want to understand the overall value that the proposed projects would bring to this area," Fawver said, "because, obviously it's a one-of-a-kind area that we have, and we want to make sure that any project that goes there is right for it and is good enough for this area that we hold dear."