

# **Bond Case Briefs**

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## **Boulder Pauses Talks of Re-Up with JP Morgan Chase, as Environmentalists Call for City-Owned Public Bank.**

### ***Banking issue likely to be discussed next month, mayor says***

Boulder is holding off, for now, on renewing a contract with JP Morgan Chase, the city's longtime banking provider and a funder of controversial oil pipelines.

Meanwhile, environmental advocates are urging Boulder to ditch JP Morgan Chase and create a public bank — an idea that will at least be discussed in concept, according to the mayor.

About a year ago, the City Council passed a resolution in support of the Standing Rock Sioux and allies who protested the Dakota Access Pipeline, and in doing so also asked city finance staff to explore possibly severing ties with JP Morgan Chase, Boulder's bank since 2004.

After issuing a request for proposals from banks and doing several months of exploration, staff returned in October to report to the council, via a memo, that it did not appear there were any banks both capable of handling the city's significant banking needs and up to the city's ethical standards on fossil fuels and other matters.

The recommendation from staff was that Boulder extend the city's relationship with JP Morgan Chase.

But the memo containing that recommendation arrived at an awkward time, Mayor Suzanne Jones said, since an election was around the corner.

"I imagined that few had had time to read (the memo) and respond," Jones said this week, in an email.

"And I had heard from at least one Council member that they were disappointed that a better banking entity option that was less involved in fossil fuel investing had not presented itself."

So, rather than authorize staff to negotiate an extension of the city contract with JP Morgan Chase, the council will discuss this as a group, likely on Dec. 19.

Said Jones, of her approach to that upcoming conversation, "I do think that, while council obviously needs to make sure that the city has reliable, secure, efficient and cost-effective banking services, we are also obligated to work with an institution that most aligns with our City's social and environmental values and goals.

"I was disappointed that the RFP process did not reveal an institution that maximizes both of those objectives."

A coalition of 23 different groups — among them: Earth Guardians, Elephant Journal, 350 Colorado, Kids Against Fracking and Rainforest Action Network — co-signed a letter to the council that argues

there is, in fact, an option to maximize both objectives.

“We call on the city of Boulder to continue its climate leadership by moving our city’s funds out of JP Morgan Chase as rapidly as feasible,” the letter reads.

“Additionally, we urge you to find a suitable banking alternative that aligns with our city’s values, using public funds for local renewable energy and community development projects instead of extreme energy extraction, beginning with authorizing a full feasibility analysis of creating a Boulder Public Bank.”

The 23 groups condemned JP Morgan Chase not only for its relationship to the Dakota Access Pipeline, but also for its association with fracking projects in Colorado, and for its status as “the No. 1 funder of tar sands oil.”

There’s no evidence, for now, that the idea of a public bank will be of interest to the council, but, at a minimum, city staff will respond to the concept, Jones said.

“We have ... periodically had local citizens raise with us the idea of establishing a public bank here in Boulder, along the lines of North Dakota’s public bank,” Jones said.

“Similarly, in the past council members indicated interest in finding a mechanism to allow Boulder residents to invest their money in Boulder civic projects, including affordable housing as well as” a municipal electric utility.

“ If Council was interested, we could also discuss the idea of negotiating an interim (rather than a long-term) agreement with our current bank while we took a deeper look at these other ideas.”

## **The Boulder Daily Camera**

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