

The Houston City Council met in regular session on August 11, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in Houston City Hall. Mayor Edwards called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were: Mayor Connie Edwards, Kevin Knutson, Tony Schultz and Cheryl Sanden. Also present were: Chris Peterson, Larry Jerviss, Randy Thesing, Ed Jacobs, Leonard Olson, Audrey Hegland, Chief David Breault, Marlene Schultz, Ellyn Baumann, Craig Stanislawski, Karla Bloem, Carol Meeks, Sheryl Sherry, Angie Rodenburg of the Fillmore County Journal. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

**MN Department of Health – Radium Compliance Agreement:** Peterson presented an amended compliance agreement that will give the City more time to complete the project, beginning in May 1, 2015 and ending January 1, 2019, when the treatment plant would be completed. Jim Kochie provided an overview of design considerations for treatment that would help with the radium problem. After discussion, it was decided that building a treatment plant is the best option for the City, and would also rid the City of the iron in the current water supply. Kochie said that the HMO/Silica Sand Filter process is the one most often used for a water treatment plant. The site must be large enough for 60'x40' building minimum, include parking, be located below the reservoir enough to provide 40 psi static pressure, a sanitary sewer and three-phase power must be available, and have separate transmission mains from each well. Thesing felt there would be enough room for the plant by the reservoir.

Peterson stated application for funding will initially be made to three sources: MN Public Facilities Authority (PFA), Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) and the USDA Rural Development, which requires a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process in selecting an engineer. If directed by the Council, she will prepare a RFQ and get qualifications from some firms for Council review at their September or October meeting. Once an engineer is selected, then fees will be negotiated. If an agreement on fees cannot be reached, then the Council may choose to negotiate with another engineer. After further discussion, MOTION MADE BY SANDEN, SECONDED BY SCHULTZ TO APPROVE THE RADIUM COMPLIANCE AGREEMENT WITH THE REVIEWED SCHEDULE; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Prairie Meadows – Infrastructure Review:** Currently there are 29 lots available in Prairie Meadows Development; the Planning Commission is reviewing ways to encourage home construction in the development and increase the tax capacity of the City. Peterson is gathering information regarding as-built plans and infrastructure elevations. The original as-built plans by La Crosse Engineering showing the grading plan have not been found; Peterson is continuing to search. She will continue to gather further information and suggested the Council authorize up to \$2,000 for Davy Engineering to provide surveying necessary.

Question was raised as to if the survey is the developer's responsibility. Peterson stated that the original developer's agreement is being checked for full compliance on what is included, and to get the developer to comply with what is written. In the meantime it would help move the development along if the City did the survey to establish elevation benchmarks, a process which should take one or two days. Kochie stated that each lot needs to have a site plan showing how it will be kept drained, since the area is so flat.

There is another property owner interested in developing land to the south of the City and given this, question was raised whether the City would be setting precedence by doing the survey in Prairie Meadows.

It was decided to table this discussion until the next Council meeting. In the interim, Peterson will locate the site map and as-built plans and discuss these with the developer.

**Emerald Ash Borer Update:** Currently it has been confirmed in Caledonia and possibly one tree in Houston; if is infected then it will have to be removed. If it is a boulevard tree, there will be a shared 50-50 expense with the homeowner; otherwise it will be the homeowner's responsibility.

**Archery Range:** The City has an ordinance prohibiting shooting of bows and arrows in town. An archery range is being developed up by the old reservoir in South Park by volunteers, and the City's umbrella insurance policy will cover this outdoor sports activity. In an effort to make this an official archery range complete with backstops, fencing and 3-D targets, a proposal has been brought before the Council, including a possible funding source. A matching archery grant of \$2500 to \$10,000 is available through the DNR; application deadline is August 29.

In the meantime, Thesing requested permission from the Council to permit residents to shoot in the area already designated while the grant is being written to support the larger project; the Council was supportive of this.

Peterson said all reference to the project must be termed as an archery range. She will also determine if in-kind donations can count toward the \$5,000 match. It was agreed that archery is becoming a very popular sport so the range can be a very significant benefit for residents and visitors alike, and is worth pursuing. A community committee chaired by Ed Jacobs and volunteer Leonard Olson will work with the Park and Rec Board to gather more information and seek funding. The matching grant opportunity is a one-time funding so it was decided to go for \$10,000 matching grant. MOTION BY SCHULTZ SECONDED BY SANDEN TO APPROVE WORKING WITH THE PARK AND REC BOARD TO MOVE AHEAD WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARCHERY RANGE AND SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION TO THE DNR FOR A MATCHING GRANT OF \$10,000; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Outdoor Benches and Banners:** Mayor Edwards proposed to improve the visual appeal of the downtown by purchasing new banners and benches. The old banners are very faded and the wooden benches in rough condition. Craig Stanislawski, of WILD EXHIBIT was present and provided examples of banners and fabrics. Sanden and Schultz will work with him to develop a new banner and place one on every other light pole.

The outdoor benches are getting old and need work if they are to be kept. It was felt important to have benches on Cedar and other places including City Hall where families and elderly can sit. At this time there are seven benches in various places and three more are suggested. Regarding cost, the City's old plow truck sold on-line for more than expected so these funds could perhaps go toward the benches.

Council Room chairs: Mayor Connie and Knutson will work on possible replacement of current chairs.

**Minutes:** MOTION TO APPROVE MADE BY KNUTSON, SECONDED BY SANDEN; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Financial Report:** MOTION BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY KNUTSON TO PAY THE BILLS; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

#### DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

**Nature Center:** Bloem is working on signage for the owl sculptures that will be placed on pedestals around town. A lease has been signed for the Houston Mercantile building as a temporary home for the Owl Center as it develops, and she continues to write grants and fundraise toward this. She said visitors to the Nature Center and Trailhead are up 25% than this time last year and she feels this is largely due to the new Natural Playground.

**Maintenance:** The old plow truck sold on-line for \$11,000, which was much more than they expected. The old heavy plow sold for \$625. The water leak on Ellsworth will be repaired this week. The sewer plant fencing needs to be replaced; a 1000 ft. of used 6' fencing is available for purchase for \$3,000, and the maintenance crew will do the work. MOTION BY SANDEN, SECONDED BY SCHULTZ, TO PURCHASE THE 1000 FEET OF USED 6' FENCING FOR THE SEWER PLANT; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Sludge Pump:** Needs to be replaced before it is time to haul sludge again; replacement pump is \$5,400. MOTION MADE BY SCHULTZ, SECONDED BY KNUTSON, TO APPROVE PURCHASE OF A REPLACEMENT SLUDGE PUMP FOR \$5,400; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Sewer Plant:** Suggestion has been received from a MPCA representative that the City start thinking about replacing the sewer plant since it was built in 1973.

**Band Shell electricity:** During the summer concerts, interference in the sound system has developed and needs to be eliminated.

**City Administrator:** Working on the zoning and permit process; all permit forms are now on the City web site.

**Hoedown:** Schultz stated there were very few incidents and the event was quite successful, with perfect weather. The Board may put a report in the Banner about revenues gained from this event and after expenses are met, how they use their funds to support the community.

MOTION BY SANDEN, SECONDED BY KNUTSON TO ADJOURN AT 7:45 PM; MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.