

Council Approves Final Plans Library Addition; Hears from Public About Yard Waste Issue

Written by Nemaha County Herald
Friday, 23 July 2010 02:59 -

Auburn City Council addressed a varied agenda during its July 12 meeting. An article in last week's newspaper reported on the council approving reconsideration of special assessments on two street improvement projects in the southwest part of the city.

The council heard an update on the final plans for the addition to Auburn Memorial Library. Architect Jennifer Klein with Clark Enersen Partners and Library Director Sherry Black were present to answer questions. Klein said the 2,500 square foot addition would include making the entire facility all-electric for heating and air conditioning, and providing a meeting room capable of seating 51 people. She said the library has advertised for bids and anticipates an Aug. 10 bid opening.

Black said the larger meeting room will represent quite an improvement from the current one which can become quite crowded at times, especially during Children's Story Hours. Also, freeing up the space in the current meeting room so it can serve as the library's computer lab will allow patrons to access the public computers in more privacy and free up room in the main area for more stacks and reading materials, etc.

The council approved the plans and specifications as proposed.

Harms Property Purchase

An agenda item drawing considerable attention involved the city's consideration of purchasing property from Mark Harms to relocate the grass, brush and tree waste disposal site. The city currently leases access to half of the Harms property as its burn site and is considering purchasing a roughly 80-acre tract from Harms which includes the burn site and to which Auburn residents would be required to haul their own yard and tree waste. This property would serve as a replacement for the current site near 28th and "O" Streets located adjacent to the unwanted furniture and appliance site operated cooperatively by the City of Auburn and Nemaha County.

Dottie Holliday had questions for the council and offered assistance to the City of Auburn to develop an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of this purchase. Holliday was advised by Mayor Bob Engles that a Phase 1 study would cost \$1,600 and the pricetag for a Phase 2 study would run between \$7,000 and \$9,000.

Holliday opened her comments by saying that many people are concerned about changing the yard waste drop-off site from 28th Street to the Harms' land west of Auburn. She also made a 14-page handout available to the city council and anyone who wanted one.

In addition, fellow Auburn resident Paul Fleming has completed an analysis on what should be done to determine if there is indeed a fiscal savings with changing from the present site. Fleming was unable to attend last week's meeting to present his paper and answer questions at that time.

City Treasurer Glen Krueger submitted a letter indicating that he believes providing a location for Auburn residents to get rid of branches, brush and grass clippings is a good service which the community's residents not only appreciate, but have also come to expect. He concluded by saying that it is his belief that the city would be better off financially if they were to acquire the Harms property.

Holtzman Questions Continuing the Service

City Councilman Larry Holtzman, who also serves as Street Committee Chairman, commented on problems associated with the yard waste site and which would continue even if the location changed. He said, "We have illegal dumping at the brush lot every week right now. That trash

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then goes into a dumpster if it isn't safe for the city crews to burn it. Citizens in many communities have to pay to have their brush or glass clippings hauled away. This is not a required service. Why does the city even want this responsibility? We have street projects that need taken care of too. There's only so much money to go around."

Holtzman moved that the city close its brush site immediately and discontinue the service. Dennis Wittmann seconded the motion and said he did so to allow for further discussion on the matter.

Wittmann said Nemaha County manages the appliance aspect of the unwanted furniture and appliance collection site. "This site and services have been discussed in some manner during all of my six years on the council. There is constant if not daily abuse at the lot," he commented.

The vote to close the site failed 1-5, with Holtzman casting the lone yes vote.

Other Business

The council approved a proposal with Thiele Geotech, Inc. for a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment for the Harms Farm property and authorized the mayor to sign the proposal and notice to proceed. Holliday questioned if the \$1,600 quote submitted back in May would still be honored as two months have passed since that time and the proposal indicated that it would be held open for a period of 45 days after May 14. Mayor Engles advised that the company would be contacted the next day to see if the proposed fee remained the same.

In what was described as a housekeeping matter, the council approved amendments to the City Auburn and Board of Public Works Employee Pension Plan and Trust documents.

Councilmembers approved paying a \$2,125 membership dues request with Southeast Nebraska Development District for Fiscal Year 2011 and a separate \$1,005 housing dues support request to SENDD for FY2011.