

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS  
MARCH 10, 2021

Charles City city council met in a planning session on March 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor Dean Andrews presided and the following council members were present: Keith Starr, Jerry Joerger, DeLaine Freeseaman, Phoebe Pittman and Phillip Knighten. Also present were city administrator Steve Diers, city engineer John Fallis and city attorney Brad Sloter.

Mayors comments - Mayor Andrews asked city engineer Fallis to give an update on the Charley Western Trail Bridge construction. The west pier is built and they got started on the east pier today. By the first of April, it will really be taking shape as a bridge.

Ordinance 1151 to amend Section 22 of zoning ordinance pertaining to off street parking requirements was reviewed. This ordinance had originally been considered by planning and zoning at a public hearing a few months ago and they recommended approval of it to the council. When the city council then discussed it, they decided to wait and incorporate these changes into the revised zoning ordinance, which was being done very soon. But the rewrite of the zoning ordinance is moving slower than anticipated, due in part to COVID issues. We can pass this ordinance now and it will be incorporated into the revised zoning ordinance. This revision to the off street parking requirements would make it less burdensome to bring a parking lot up to code. It allows for a partial gravel parking lot and a designated portion to be hard surface. Dean Stewart, a local realtor, was present and stated that this amendment would be very helpful to potential buyers so they know what their costs might be when purchasing some of these properties with gravel lots. We have quite a few gravel parking lots in the city and several of those properties are for sale. Council member Freeseaman stated that he is not 100% in favor of this amendment, he thinks paved parking lots will increase the value of the property. He's more concerned about the main highways. City administrator Diers commented that this ordinance only pertains to arterial streets. We have already changed the off street parking for side streets to allow for materials other than concrete, such as millings, to be used. Mayor Andrews and Council member Pittman commented that they liked that this will help our main roads look nicer. Council member Knighten stated that he is in favor of this ordinance and we need to get it passed. City attorney Sloter commented that this will also be an easier ordinance for staff to enforce. The first reading of this ordinance is set for March 15 with a public hearing being set for a future council meeting.

There is a nuisance property on South Johnson that we have been working on for several years to get abated. We have had no luck with the owner of the property, so staff is working to acquire the property through the 657 process. COVID issues have delayed the trial for this nuisance property. We would like to buy the property, demolish the house and then sell the lot since it is a buildable lot. Staff just wanted to update council on this before bringing it a regular meeting for council action since it's been awhile since this was before council.

The electrical upgrade project at North Cedar Terrace has to be put on hold for now so this agenda item was not discussed.

Red Cedar Subdivision has been presented to the city for their approval. This is outside city limits but within a two mile distance so the city needs to sign off on it. This has been operated as a hotel type property with several structures available for rent. The owners would like to now subdivide this parcel and sell each house individually. The driveway that accesses this property has a small sliver of the adjoining property that crosses it. The city is requesting that the county correct this issue before the subdivision gets finalized. This item will be on the next regular agenda for council action.

The Grove Street/Illinois Street intersection improvement project was discussed. Council approved a design agreement for this project last month. This project will correct storm water issues in this area that were identified several years ago. The new owner of the Bailey Nursery property has agreed to cost share this project since it will help preserve the bridge located here that is the only access point to his property. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$135,000 with the city share being \$109,000. Council member Pittman asked if we had considered using some other "green" material on the embankment rather than all rip rap. Fallis replied that we had used gabion baskets on a smaller project in this area.

Some work is needed to be done on our clarifiers at the wastewater plant. The scum baffle needs to be replaced and the grit wash drain pipe needs to be rerouted. These would be included in a change order for the WRRF project. A quote has been received from Portzen for the scumbaffle for \$47,722.60 and the grit wash drain pipe has been quoted at \$11,327.14. These costs will be paid through the project funds. This change order will be on the next regular agenda for council action.

We have been made aware of a rural innovation grant sponsored by IEDA. This is designed to leverage local dollars into supporting creative ideas to address local challenges faced by rural communities. It is a 2 for 1 match for up to

\$20,000. We are proposing partnering with ADC, Chamber and two private entities to equally share in funding the \$10,000 match to help find a use for the empty Kmart building on South Grand. We still need to verify with ADC and the Chamber that they can participate in this. If one of them can't, we may have to split the match four ways instead of five. Councilmember Starr asked why the owners of the building aren't involved. Diers replied that we plan to reach out to them but we aren't confident that they will be willing to participate. Councilmembers Freeseaman and Knighten commented that the city needs to be proactive with this building and try to get it filled. Diers will consult with ADC director Tim Fox and the developer to see what our goal is with the \$30,000. This may not be ready for council action on March 15.

It is time for requesting proposals for the city audit services for the next three years. City clerk O'Donnell sent out proposals to 6 firms, including the state auditor. We received two "no thank you" letters and two proposals. One is from TP Anderson who has done our audit the last three years. Their bid was \$16,000 for year one, \$16,800 for year two and \$17,600 for year three. They quoted a not to exceed fee of \$4000 for the single audit each year. The other proposal was from Gardiner Thomsen, who had done our audit for several years prior to TP Anderson. Their bid for the next three years was \$20,500 for first year, \$21,250 for the second year and \$22,000 for the third year. They did not quote the fee for a single audit without knowing how many major programs would be involved. Both firms have done good work for the city. One concern was the difference in the amount of time each firm spent onsite doing audit work. But after consulting with a local CPA, it was determined that is not a good indication of the quality of audit we receive. This item will be on the next regular agenda for council action.

The city's local option sales tax is up for renewal next year. This has been designated to be used 100% for street maintenance and construction for the entire time we've had it in place. We need to decide what we will use these funds for and get that information out to the public ahead of the vote. We can't combine this referendum on a general election ballot, there are only certain dates throughout the year we can put this on the ballot. We have made good use of these funds over the years for major street projects in the city. Councilmember Freeseaman suggested forming a committee made up of citizens, staff and maybe a council member to discuss this and help decide what we want to designate for which these funds will be used. Council member Starr commented that he likes having it for streets but could we also add something for sidewalks. Council member Joerger stated that city hall renovations and a new pool should also be considered. Councilmember Knighten asked if we divert these funds from streets, how would we fund our street projects? Diers replied that we would have to look at alternative funds or cut back on the amount of street work we do. Fallis is working on a list of past street projects we've funded with option tax so we can see just how much it's benefitted the city. This item will be on a future planning session for more discussion.

City administrator Diers reported that 6 RFIs have been received by the telecom with 5 of those actually being within our request guidelines. The consultants will evaluate them and report back to the telecom board on their findings and recommendations. The next meeting for the telecom is March 23. Council member Joerger asked what the status is of Cal's building on North Main that the city has purchased and what our plans are for that building. Diers replied that this building would come into play if we re-design that area of Main Street as we've discussed in the past. Tomorrow is the preconstruction meeting for the projects at 401 N. Main and the ambulance bay remodel at the fire station. Diers will be attending the IMMI conference Wednesday through Friday next week. We have recently submitted our first draw down on the SRF loan for the WRRF project.

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned.

Dean Andrews, Mayor

Attest:

Trudy O'Donnell, City Clerk