

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
AUGUST 11, 2021

Charles City city council met in a planning session on August 11, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in council chambers. Mayor Dean Andrews presided and the following council members were present: Keith Starr (attending via Zoom), Jerry Joerger, DeLaine Freeseman, Phoebe Pittman and Phillip Knighten. Also present were city administrator Steve Diers and city engineer John Fallis.

No discussion to be held on 3' easement on property located on North Grand.

Jessica Gintz was present to discuss plans for the Charles City Rotary to install lighted Christmas displays in Central Park starting first part of November through first week of January. She has talked to park and rec director Tyler Mitchell on their plans and has been given the okay to proceed. She has also talked with Chamber and area businesses to get their participation in adding to this event. Hope to eventually expand to along the river on Riverside. They will have Rotary members clear the sidewalks in the center of Central Park and will block off the park into quadrants to keep visitors away from the displays. They will mark where the memorial stones are in the park to be sure they don't damage them when they remove snow, they have a snow blower with plastic blades to keep damage from occurring. This will be on the next regular agenda for council consideration.

A Façade application has been submitted for 700 Hulin Street and was presented by Mark Wicks. This project will include siding on the south side of the building and partially on the Main Street side. The owners have consulted with Main Street designers and they have recommended not siding the entire side of Main Street, so that is why that will only be partially sided. The funding requested is for the maximum amount of \$10,000. They have previously been awarded Façade funds for the siding on the other sides of the building. Council member Starr asked that if this entire siding project had been submitted at once, would they qualify for more funding? Wicks responded no, this project was split out into phases. Starr asked if we need to look at limiting the amount of funding for this type of phased project and Wicks stated that we would have to change the language in the grant to not allow more than one grant for basically the same project. Council member Starr stated that he is in favor of this project but would like discuss multiple funding for projects in the Façade program at a future planning session.

Staff has been discussing retention/recruiting of police personnel and has come up with some possible options. Diers commented that many cities are opening up their residency requirements because they are experiencing difficulties in recruiting and retaining their police officers. Mason City recently expanded their residency requirement to 30 miles, which includes Charles City. Initial discussions with the police union have resulted in some interest in making some changes. Adding a sign on bonus of \$5000 for certified officers, offering a bonus of \$2000 for living in city limits, adding a pay increase at 8 years and 10 years of employment, increasing wages \$2/hour across the board and adding one week vacation from day one of employment have all been discussed. The police union had also requested an additional 5% salary increase. Estimates of the yearly cost of implementing the \$2/hr increase is \$100,000 and the 5% increase is \$40,000. Council was generally in favor of working to retain our current officers and trying to recruit new officers with the pay increases and increasing residency limit. We are currently short technically 2 officers with one being at academy, so our officers are working some 12 hour Some concern over emergency response time, will that suffer if too many live too far away from town. Police chief Anderson commented that the emergencies don't happen real often and the \$2000 stipend for living in the city will hopefully get more officers living in town. This challenge of keeping and recruiting police officers is occurring all across the state, so we aren't unique in this situation. Diers also commented that these wage increases would have a ripple effect in the command staff and would likely require their wages to be increased as well. We may be able to use some funding from CARES act and other sources to cover these increases, but that would only help the next three years. Council wants to keep us competitive with neighboring cities and try to get new officers so we don't burn out our current staff. Chief Anderson will get more information on what other cities are doing with residency requirements and other possible changes and get that out to the council. There will be an item on the next regular agenda for council consideration.

Discussion held on the city's local option sales tax. That tax is set to expire at the end of next year and we need to decide what purpose we will use that funding. Currently, 100% of this tax is dedicated to street uses. We have been able to accomplish a lot of projects with these funds, so we definitely should keep a portion of this for streets. We receive approximately \$900,000 each year of this funding. Some other options that have been previously discussed are an aquatic center, ambulance services and capital projects such as city hall. We currently do major street projects every other year and let the fund balance build up a bit, so taking any of that funding away would affect what we do for street repairs. Much discussion on what the city's needs are and what would be best use for this funding. We want to be sure our intended purpose is clear so the public knows what they are voting on. Consensus of the council was that roads are easy to show the citizens for what the funds are used and we always have streets that need work. We will get this ballot scheduled as soon as we can, which will probably be summer of 2022.

City administrator Diers reported that we ordered 9 different items with the \$9500 computer grant we got from the state. ADC is working on getting international accreditation for economic development groups. The onsite visit for this program will be at the end of September. A walk through was done at the Union House project today. There will probably be a request for a TIF rebate for this from the developers. Since we are a designated AARP livable community, we may be asked to consider allowing what is called "mother in law homes" in our new zoning code rewrite. We are also looking at a \$100,000 grant to install in home monitoring for elderly citizens who request it. We also will be discussing what to spend our ARP funds on at an upcoming workshop. Council member Starr reported that 9-1-1 will be meeting this Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at the courthouse.

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned.

Dean Andrews, Mayor

Attest:

Trudy O'Donnell, City Clerk