

Planning Session
August 30, 2023

The council met for a planning session on August 30, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the council chambers. The mayor presided and the following members were present: Keith Starr, DeLaine Freeseaman, Phoebe Pittman, and Patrick Lumley. Phillip Knighten was absent.

The mayor called the meeting to order.

The Foster Grandparent Program has updated their Policy and Procedure Handbook. Director, Jennifer Lantz, was on hand to answer any questions the council members might have. She explained that many of the policies have remained the same but she has changed some procedures regarding recognition and foster grandparent of the year. They have added a Charles City Legacy award. AmeriCorps Seniors has now allowed the grandparents to instead of doing a studies report, the grandparents can read a book and answer questions to obtain hours. Teleservice policy was left in place. Diversity, Equality & Inclusion, social media, Harassment, Pandemic & Emergency Management policies were all added. A lot of the policies mirrored the City of Charles City's handbook. Jennifer also said they would be looking for 2 new advisory board members. Jennifer has hired Candice Haugh, as a recruiter. Her first day was today. Council suggested that it would be good to have Ahlers and Cooney or the city attorney review these policies. Administrator Diers said that he would get the city attorney's input.

Nick Kent from ROI Energy contacted the city a couple months ago about a LED light replacement program that Mid-American energy has offered rebates for. Nick came in and met with the department heads and looked at areas that would be good for replacement. He has put a proposal together that after the Mid-American incentives are applied in the amount of \$22,433 the total cost of the project would be \$39,760. Changing the lights to LED will result in a \$9,808 per year savings which makes it a payback in 4.05 years. Fixtures will have a 5 -year warranty, 50,000 -hour life expectancy. Consensus was this was a good project to move forward with.

Cory Spieker, Street/Water Superintendent, informed the council that there has been a lot of illegal dumping at the Shaw Avenue dumpsite. He would like to try restrict access to this area by adding a gate to the back area of the property. This gate would be locked and access could be gained by obtaining a key from City Hall. He would like to get some education out to citizens through social media. Chief Anderson stated that the calls for service have increased for this area. A camera has been installed and it is helping with prosecution of the illegal dumping. Police Department has offered to carry a key to help out. We could go back to paying someone to sit out and monitor the dump site but that would restrict the hours of operation. The front area will remain open for citizens to dump leaves, tree branches and yard debris. The back area is used more by the commercial tree services that remove many trees at one time. Wood chips and compost will be moved to the front area for the citizens to have access to them. Diers has been working to find a way to clear out some of the mulch and wood chips that have accumulated in the dump area. Consensus is to try this and see how it works.

Phase 2 of 3 of the tree removal projects will be presented at the next council meeting. It includes approximately 200 trees with no alternates. At that meeting we will set the dates for the public hearing and letting. Project has completion date of July 24, 2024. Mayor Andrews asked how the first project was coming along. Spieker stated contractor is about 1/3 of the way done. The heat has slowed them down a little. A spreadsheet has been done to track the process and Diers is hoping to provide the

council with a copy of that at the next meeting. Contractor is hoping to be done by November with the first round. Trees that are marked green are the first round, the second-round trees are marked pink, and the third round are marked white.

A proposal has been requested from SEH for scope and fees to provide the needed design services for the 5th Avenue watermain looping project through the project's bid letting. The project involves boring and jacking a casing pipe under the Canadian National Railway and looping of watermain on each side of the railway. SEH was asked as they are the most familiar with our water system and the quote came back as reasonable. SEH has equipment to survey the site from outside the railroad right of way to reduce costs incurred from the design phase. The design fees provided are a maximum not to exceed contract of \$25,750. Geo tech fees and the application fee to the railroad are not included in the proposal. The application to the railroad is \$1,330. SEH will submit the design to the railroad for approval. Once the railroad approved the proposal, the project will be let out for bids. Pittman asked how this would affect the property owners in this area. Brian Sullivan, city engineer, stated that most residential users would not see much change. It may help a little with water pressure but the main advantage is fire protection.

Our franchises with Mid-American Energy are coming due. The franchise agreement permits Mid-American to utilize the city right of ways for provision of gas and electric services. Agreements by state law can be up to 25 years. Our current agreement was for 15 years. Diers stated that initial discussions with Mid-American, they are asking for a minimum of 20-year renewal. We also have the ability to implement a franchise fee anywhere from 1%-5%. The only franchise agreement we currently have is with Mediacom for cable tv and it is set at 5%. The utility usually will pass this fee on to the customer. Diers provided a sample utility bill from another community that currently has a franchise fee in place. Diers also asked what this franchise fee would look like for the residents of Charles City. Tyler from Mid-American Energy gave feedback on what a bill would look like with a 5% franchise fee. On an average bill for Charles City the franchise fee would be about \$8.17 per month. When a franchise fee is implemented, you cannot also collect local option sales tax. John Danos, our bonding attorney, provided a sample revenue purpose statement for the council to review. Projections are that for every percentage point of franchise fee it would generate about \$166,000 of revenue per year. Process to implement would be a matter of a public hearing and then three readings of a new ordinance. Consensus is that this would be a good way to finance some of the projects that need to be done in town. Pittman would like to see some educational pieces presented to the citizens so that they understand why this funding is needed. Diers explained that this would diversify our revenue stream so that we are not as dependent on property tax revenues. Starr asked if there were any possible revenue streams for the pipeline or wind farms that have been discussed. Diers said those conversations have been had but they have not received any answers yet. Lumley asked Diers from the council perspective what information or feedback is he looking for. Diers said he is recommending 5% franchise fee which can be changed once a year. Diers said the next step would be to establish a date for a public hearing in the next month or so. Diers would like to get an initial draft for discussion purposes and possibly take action in October or November.

Diers reported to council that a tree planting project is in the works. The Rotary Club and Lions Clubs have each received a \$5,000 grant. Diers has also applied for a \$5,000 grant. If received this would provide \$15,000 in funding for tree planting. This amount will provide for approximately 130 trees. Planting will be September 11th & 12th. Help has been lined up from the Charles City High School

students along with adult volunteers. Lath stakes will be placed showing where and what variety of trees will be planted. Citizens will be able to provide input as to whether they would like the tree planted or not or if someone did not receive a tree, they could request one if a tree was available. The first two years the trees will have to be maintained as far as watering and such.

Mill-race project is scheduled to start next week. Notices have gone out to business owners. Signage has started to go up. Brian said the contractor is planning on starting the project before product needed is received. Contractor is hoping by the time product is received they will be done with preliminary work.

Thriving Communities project is proceeding. Diers, Mayor, Ginger Williams, Katie Nolte, Emily Garden and Tim Fox will be at the housing conference to present. Conference runs Tuesday, Wednesday and part of Thursday next week. They will have a booth on the conference floor to talk to vendors. Projects they are presenting are the 13th street project and a potential project with the Cedar Health Building.

Diers will be heading to Ames Friday for the presentation of the award that we won for the Charley Western bridge.

Diers spoke about using the owl device for meetings in the council chambers. Tested the owl out at the ADC meeting this morning and is using it for this planning sessions. Might work well for council meetings as well. This would replace having to use the laptops which don't always work the best.

Lumley attended the EMS advisory council meeting. He talked about this being an organizational meeting. They did make a recommendation to the county supervisors to not put the EMS levy to a vote on the November ballot. They feel they needed more time to educate the public and do not want to compete with the school bond referendum. They could have a special election or place the vote on the November 2024 election. Committee would like to align with the ambulance commission to see where they are at with starting their own service or the AMR contract. They have learned that the reimbursement rate for the Medicare and Medicaid in Iowa has taken a downward turn. The question becomes how do you fund the service. Commission discussed that they will need to be very blunt and ask the public do you want an ambulance service or not and what level of service would you like. They are gathering information from the counties that have passed an EMS levy to see what they feel worked for them.

Being there was no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Dean Andrews, Mayor

Attest:

Virginia Titus, Deputy Clerk

