

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
OCTOBER 11, 2023

Charles City city council met in a planning session on October 11, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in council chambers. Mayor Dean Andrews presided and the following council members were present: Keith Starr, Patrick Lumley, Phillip Knighten and Phoebe Pittman. Absent was DeLaine Freeseaman. Also present were city administrator Steve Diers and engineer in training Brian Sullivan.

Mayor's comments - Mayor Andrews reminded everyone that the city council candidate forum will be held tomorrow night at 7:00 and the school board candidate forum is tonight at 7:00.

Mark Wicks, chamber director, was present to discuss the street closure request for Spook Walk. They are asking for the following streets to be closed from 1:00 p.m. until approximately 9:00 p.m. on October 23: St. Mary's from Clark to Riverside, Leland Ave from Clark to Riverside Dr. and Riverside Dr. from St. Mary's to Leland. Leland closing was added this year due to safety concerns. In the past, they've had some people drive in that way and with all the kids milling around there, it is just not safe. The rain date for this is October 30. This item will be on the next regular agenda for council action.

The Main Street agreement is up for renewal. This used to be every two years but now has changed to every four years. There are two accreditation process throughout those four years and if a city fails one, they are out of the program. The other terms of the agreement remain unchanged. This will be on next Monday's regular agenda for council action.

The maintenance agreement with the City Improvement Association is up for renewal. This is for the city helping to maintain the various CIA parks around the city and is a three year agreement. One small change is that the payments will be made up front and we will hold the portion earmarked for capital purchases in a separate fund to be used when needed. They used to hold on to that money until we needed it. \$5000 is for operations and \$8500 is for mower purchases. There were also a couple of parks that were removed from the list. Tyler Mitchell, park and rec director, stated that we are able to do the necessary work under what we are paid, so we are okay there.

Preliminary plans for the 2024 Main Street rehabilitation street project were reviewed again with Jason Petersburg from Veenstra & Kimm engineering firm. The public information meeting held recently was well attended and lots of questions were asked. The changes discussed at the last planning session were made in the plans, including adding two parking spaces in front of North Iowa Lawn, taking out the island at the stop sign there at N. Grand and using markings instead to delineate the lanes. The public was asked at the informational meeting what they thought about removing the bricks along the sidewalk on Main Street and vast majority were in favor of removing them and replacing with solid concrete. The front doors of the businesses will remain accessible during construction with a walkway from the street intersection. Veenstra and Kimm will have representatives going door to door on Main Street to convey important information on the project to the business owners. Jason commented they would also like to get emails of the businesses to have another way to update them on the project. It was also suggested possibly going on the radio weekly to give updates and use the city website to share necessary information. Jason had received a request to remove a retaining wall located at the corner of Gilbert St. and South Main as part of the project. We need to determine exactly whose wall it is (private or city) before we can make that decision. Question on if we can color the concrete that is replacing the bricks along the Main St. sidewalk. It was decided that this would be too costly and make it tough to match if there are repairs needed in the future. City staff has been working on getting access for North Iowa Lawn and Sports during construction and this could possibly turn into permanent access.

A change order has been submitted for the Mill Race parking lot project. They requested to add some days to the timeline due to delays with relocating lines for Mid American and Mediacom that was not anticipated. Original request was for 14 days but that has been lowered to 9 days. The other items prompting this change order include: replacement of two stormwater intake frames and grates, addition of modified subbase as a bid item, change of ADA ramp curb style, repairs to a sanitary manhole, replacement of a water valve and adjustment of a telecom manhole.

A request from LJP/Jendro for an increase in their rates has been received. The contract with them allows for them to request increases throughout the contract term and this year, they are asking for an 8.4% increase comprised of a CPI rate of 5.9% and the increase of tipping fees at the FMC Landfill of 2.5%. Discussion on how to accurately calculate the tipping fee increase, it should be tied to the tonnage

from Charles City. City administrator Diers had requested that information from Jendro today and hopes to get that back in the next couple days. Discussion on how to spread this increase across our tote prices. Last year, we had put the higher increase on the larger totes since they are the heavier users. Diers had prepared a spreadsheet showing different options for pricing the totes. Consensus seemed to be making everyone pay the same price per gallon, that would be more fair. Council will wait to act on this request until the requested additional information is received from LJP/Jendro.

Implementing a tax abatement program in the city was discussed. There are a lot of factors to consider when doing this. Information gleaned from the recent housing conference showed that most cities currently give a 100% abatement for 10 years. Previous council discussions leaned toward a sliding scale for abatement, so this is something that needs to be reviewed again. To begin, we need to designate slum/blight conditions and given the numerous nuisance properties throughout the city, this should be easy to achieve. Code enforcement is working on a map of the city showing the various properties and this will be given to council. We need to designate a threshold of how much the taxable valuation needs to be increased in order to qualify for the abatement. Each abatement application would need to come before council for approval. Things such as new siding and a new roof are good things for a homeowner but probably won't raise the valuations by much and therefore not qualify for abatement. Mayor Andrews commented that at the housing task force yesterday, it was discussed about starting a revolving loan fund for those who might not qualify for low income assistance or for those things that wouldn't get them qualified for tax abatement, either (such as siding and roof projects). Discussion on who to include in the abatement program, would it be just for owner occupied or also for rentals or businesses. Mayor Andrews commented that the housing committee thought it should include everyone except industrial probably, but this is something council will decide. Diers stated that a public hearing needs to be set on this and it will be on Monday's agenda to do so. More discussion on this will be held at the October 25 planning session to iron out some of the details ahead of the public hearing.

Diers commented that the Zoetis project is ready to have some action taken by council. Since this is in the SW Bypass TIF district, this will have to go to that board first for recommendation and then back to the governing entities for action. The urban renewal plan will need to be amended to add this project in. Several meetings have been held with potential housing developers in the past week. Staff is having discussions with an individual who is interested in taking some of our wood chips. We have found out that Mason City does take trees from their residents but not anyone else (especially businesses). This is something we may have to consider doing as well since our wood chip supply is getting very large. We will be reviewing the final version of our capital improvement plan at the October 25 planning session.

Council member Lumley commented that the next meeting of the EMS advisory board will be held October 24 in the board of supervisors board room.

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned.

Dean Andrews, Mayor

Attest:

Trudy O'Donnell, City Clerk