

GOCO discussions return to soccer

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Wednesday, 28 August 2013 09:59 -

Holyoke City Council members faced questions regarding their decision to exclude the construction of soccer fields from the Great Outdoors Colorado grant application at their Tuesday, Aug. 20 meeting.

Sharon Jones, who had attended prior council meetings to voice her support of the fields when the idea of adding soccer fields to the application was first discussed, attended the meeting to vocalize her disappointment. Jones also raised questions about the community support issue and what could be done in the future to secure the fields.

“I am passionate for the sport, and I am passionate for getting youth involved. I guess I am here tonight to ask what it will take to have the city consider soccer fields,” Jones said.

Council members explained to Jones that the lack of community support was the reason the fields were not included in the grant. Few people who took the survey about what the city should pursue in the grant were for the addition of the fields.

Jones argued that the support for the fields and the sport in general is strong in Holyoke, but from what she has gathered, a number of supporters were unaware of the survey that was advertised in the Enterprise and on city bills that were sent to residents.

Results indicated that the fields only drew 20 percent support.

Jones also took issue with the surveys not being made available in Spanish, as Holyoke has a large Spanish-speaking population.

Jones' request for the number of participants in the survey was denied at the meeting by Mayor Orville Tonsing. Citing Colorado's Open Records Act, the Enterprise's request for the survey numbers Wednesday morning resulted in immediate release of that information at the city office.

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According to the survey, only four people were in favor of the soccer fields, of the total of 20 who completed the survey.

As advised by Heidi Hillman, the grant writer hired for the project, council members initially withheld the participation level because the low survey response could hurt the city's chances of obtaining the grant.

Jones was advised that forming a small focus group or even getting a petition together would be acceptable routes in which to show the support for the cause in the future.

If the city does not receive the GOCO grant, the next grant cycle is set for March. Council member Kevin Scott was quick to point out that the county would be pursuing a GOCO grant in the next cycle, so for the city to try to attain the funds for soccer fields at that time would weaken both parties' chances of being chosen for the grants.

Jones indicated she planned to gather support from the community for the fields, but no timetable was established for when or if the city would consider the fields as a future project.

The city's GOCO grant has been completed and council members voted to support the application which was scheduled to be submitted Tuesday, Aug. 27.

Public hearing set for Holyoke Marketplace zoning changes

Council members accepted a recommendation from Holyoke Planning Commission at Tuesday's meeting to allow the subdivision exemption for NECO Grocery, doing business as Holyoke Marketplace, on a tract of land located north of Holyoke Marketplace to be used as an employee parking lot for Holyoke Marketplace.

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The planning commission will hold a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. prior to the regularly scheduled Tuesday, Sept. 3 city council meeting to discuss zoning changes for Holyoke Marketplace.

Following the public hearing, the planning commission will give their recommendation to the city council with how to proceed and a final vote by council members on the zoning changes will be made that night.

Officials report

City Superintendent Mark Brown reported that the lighting project at the high school for the football field had been completed and plans to test the lighting have been made.

He also mentioned that the water and sewer department were busy working on broken meters while the streets department is still patching streets, with seal coating scheduled to begin Monday, Aug. 26.

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that the department received 57 calls for service between Aug. 1-14. In that time they also assisted the Sheriff's Office and an FBI task force in making a couple of arrests.

Other business

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In other business Aug. 20, the council:

—accepted a contract from Building Restoration Specialists to do the brickwork at the Heginbotham Library.

—agreed to compensate Corey Zeiler and Damon Ellis \$14 an hour for their assistance with street seal coating.

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