

Push for soccer fields continues

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Soccer fields in Holyoke continue to be a hot topic as Holyoke City Council members were once again, at their Tuesday, Sept. 3 meeting, faced with visitor questions regarding the possibility of constructing local fields in the future.

While the city's application for the Great Outdoors Colorado grant was submitted without the inclusion of soccer fields, local soccer enthusiasts are hoping that by getting an early start at building support for the fields, the city will be able to bring fields to Holyoke through similar grant options in the future.

Yesenia Bencomo, Cecilia Marquez and Gloria Jimenez were in attendance to not only voice their support for the fields but to volunteer to pass out surveys or help with translating in future endeavors to ensure that the whole community is represented.

They said they want to take a proactive approach because they see the interest and need for soccer fields in town.

Mayor Orville Tonsing agreed that if they were able to show local support for the cause, the city council would be willing to reopen discussion on the topic.

While the movement for the soccer fields appears to be taking steps in the right direction, there is no timeline for when the city will go after another GOCO grant. The City of Holyoke will stay out of the next GOCO cycle as to not directly compete with the county for grant money. The county backed off the most recent GOCO grant so that the city could apply without local competition.

Phillips County Economic Development identifies 4 focus areas

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Phillips County Economic Development executive director Julie Worley also attended last week's council meeting to inform members of the work being done by PCED.

She stated that the board of directors had a strategic meeting in April to highlight four areas of focus for the year. The four identified areas are housing needs, youth migration out of Phillips County, identification of all commercial and retail sites to upload to a database at the state level and continuation of building the board and economic development position.

A housing survey will be distributed to key individuals and organizations in the county regarding the need for housing.

A survey will also be distributed to students in grades 7-12 in both Holyoke and Haxtun. The purpose of the survey will be to determine if students would want to return to work or open a business in Phillips County once they graduate from college or get some experience in the working world.

"We think what we'll find is there is a pretty good percentage of kids that would like to return and maybe we could work with them before they graduate to get them to come back," Worley said.

By identifying all commercial and retail sites in the county and uploading them to a database, everyone will know what is available in Phillips County.

Council accepts recommendation from planning commission

Zoning changes will be on the agenda for adoption during the Tuesday, Sept. 17 council meeting.

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Prior to last week's city council meeting, the planning commission held a public hearing to discuss the rezoning of the lot north of Holyoke Marketplace. The area is proposed to be changed from residential to commercial for the purpose of employee parking for Holyoke Marketplace.

The city council, at the recommendation of the planning commission, approved the changes, which will return to the table for adoption at the next meeting.

Officials report

City Superintendent Mark Brown reported last week that there had been one power outage since the previous council meeting. A squirrel was responsible for the outage in the 100-700 blocks of South Bowman and South Sherman streets.

Brown also noted that crews were going to start the process of installing the tornado siren at the fairgrounds during the week. The streets department has also begun painting parking spots and crosswalks around town.

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that from Aug. 15-28, the Holyoke Police Department generated 76 calls for service, made one arrest, gave out three citations, wrote three reports and issued 11 warnings.

Bergstrom also made a request for a stop sign to be positioned at the intersection of Emerson Street and Campbell Avenue for the westbound lane on Emerson Street.

City Clerk/Treasurer Kathy Olofson noted that the city is expecting to receive \$16,676 more in property taxes than they did last year.

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Other business

In other business Sept. 3, the council:

—approved Ordinance No. 2-2013, authorizing a medium-term contract with the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska for firm power interchange services.

Holyoke Enterprise September 12, 2013