

City Council looks at possible expenses for upcoming budget, municipal codes

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

For the past few years, the Municipal Energy Agency of Nebraska, whom Holyoke receives a portion of its power from, has been sending power across the state lines without paying the transmission rate. This information was announced at the Tuesday, Oct. 1 Holyoke City Council meeting.

Because MEAN failed to pay the transmission tariff, the members of MEAN are now responsible for the back payments that total roughly \$6.25 million. Each member's percentage of payments is prorated based on megawatt use.

Holyoke's portion of the tariff will be \$483.18 a month spread out over five years with no interest. While the additional costs were not anticipated during budgeting, Holyoke City Superintendent Mark Brown said it is a minor monthly fee for the city.

Payments for the tariff will begin in April 2014.

Council discusses problems on Sherman Avenue

The condition of the south end of Sherman Avenue was discussed at length during Tuesday's council meeting.

While council members acknowledged that the road needs repairs, Brown also voiced his opinion on the drainage problems that contributed to the decay of the road. Because the road has no curb nor gutters, the asphalt is in a vulnerable position where it can be more easily damaged from runoff.

Three corners along the road have trouble draining, causing water to collect. Brown said the

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corner of Melissa Lane and Sherman Avenue drains so poorly that the drain is constantly full of water. Brown stated that he thinks a storm sewer would help and was insistent that curbing and gutters would go a long way.

Brown estimates that it will cost between \$30,000-\$40,000 to fix the street, not including the curb, gutter and storm sewer. With that type of money being used for repairs, Brown added that the curb, gutter and asphalt inclusion is important as to not waste money repairing a street that will be destroyed again in 10 years.

An obstacle in the way of repairing the road is the fact that the west edge of the road is technically outside of city limits. One plan Brown mentioned that had been discussed in the past involves entering an agreement with the landowners on the street for the city to pay for the costs, but in the future if the area is developed and included in city limits, landowners would have to reimburse the city.

No action was taken on the issue, but it will be returned as budgeting approaches.

Addressing municipal code

Holyoke's First Baptist Church recently applied for a permit to construct a sign in front of their building.

Unfortunately for the church, a municipal code put into place within the past 10 years limits the size of signs in residential areas to 6 square feet, much smaller than the anticipated area of 18 feet long by 15 feet high. The sign will sit alongside a bell tower.

The ordinance was initially adopted for the purpose of limiting the size of signs for home occupants.

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While city council members estimated at the Tuesday meeting that every church in the city has a sign much bigger than the approved dimensions, those signs were constructed before the ordinance had been put into place.

With the code in place, the only action council members could take was to send the church to the variance board for approval. While no changes were made to the ordinance, council members have opened discussion on the topic for possible revision.

Officials report

Brown reported that the water department has been busy over the past week as they had to deal with two water mains breaking.

The first call came in Friday, Sept. 27 at 8:15 p.m. for a broken water main in the 200 block of South Worley Avenue. Crews worked until 2 a.m. to repair the water main.

A second water main broke Sunday, Sept. 29 in the 700 block of East Emerson Street at approximately 8:45 a.m. It took crews until about 1:30 p.m. to repair the main.

Holyoke also received the most recent waste water permit from the state of Colorado. The state is actually two years behind with issuing the permits as Holyoke just received its permit for 2012.

The permit came with some changes that will affect how the city budgets next year. One issue is that it must be determined if the clay liners in the sewer ponds seep. To determine this, an engineer must be hired.

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Brown also informed council members that he is looking for bids to rebuild the city pole shed that was destroyed in the April snowstorm. The pole shed will be moved to the east edge of the property, which is located about one quarter mile south on Phillips County Road 41.

Holyoke Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that between Sept. 12-25, the department generated 58 calls for service, wrote five reports and issued nine warnings. He also informed council members that two people had been bitten by one dog on the morning of Tuesday, Oct. 1. One of the bites was fairly severe and the dog was impounded but has since been returned to the owner.

Other business

In other business Oct. 1, the council:

—approved travel request for Sergeant Damon Ellis and Officer Dwight Thompson to attend an officer down class in Fort Morgan.

—renewed a liquor license for Hometown Liquor.

—agreed to purchase a commercial-grade safety cover from In The Swim to cover the baby pool at a cost of \$1,069.99.

—approved travel request for the office staff to attend the 2013 PowerManager Refresher Course in North Platte, Neb., Oct. 16-17.

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—passed Resolution No. 4-2013 to authorize a coordinated election to determine ballot issues regarding term limits and lodging tax on Nov. 5.

—agreed to leave the business lease of Veronica’s Hair & Nail Salon at \$200 a month.

—approved purchase of four rims and tires for a road grader from Woody’s Pivot Service for \$2,985.

—entered into executive session for 35 minutes to discuss personnel matters.

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