

Options considered for GOCO grant

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

With the deadline for the next Great Outdoors Colorado grant less than two months away, Holyoke City Council members continued to discuss ways in which to increase the likelihood of receiving the grant during their Tuesday, July 2 meeting.

At the June 18 council meeting, the construction of three soccer fields in Holyoke was discussed at length as a means to promote activity, which would improve the chances of being awarded a GOCO grant. Although it is still an option, a few concerns were voiced by council members about going forward with the new soccer fields.

Holyoke City Clerk/Treasurer Kathy Olofson noted that while attending a GOCO grant writing session in Yuma, she was told by a GOCO representative that the city should not add the soccer fields to the plans just to make their application more appealing.

Olofson said the representative did not specifically say not to build the fields but encouraged her to make sure the fields are something the city really wants before applying for the grant.

Olofson relayed to council members that the GOCO representative also said she believed that competing for grant money with other entities within the same county hurts the city's chances of receiving the grant.

Initially, the outfield of the small baseball field on the east side of town was considered as a location for the soccer fields. Upon measuring the area, either two of the proposed smaller fields could fit or just the larger field, but not all three. Having the three fields at separate locations around town would not be ideal either.

The city-owned land southeast of the baseball fields was also discussed as a possible location for soccer fields. The problem with the land is that it would require a good deal of work and maintenance to make it suitable for soccer.

Council members decided that a survey would be created and distributed to the people of

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Holyoke asking them what action they would like to see taken in regards to a possible soccer field.

The possibility of hiring a grant writer to help secure a GOCO grant was also discussed. Council members seemed to be in agreement that spending between \$1,500-\$2,000 was a small price to pay if it means acquiring the funds to complete projects at the baseball complex.

Citizens concerned about weeds

Joe Kinnie and Jay Dean Krueger were on hand at last week's meeting to bring attention to the growth of weeds behind Frenchman Heights.

Kinnie expressed his concern that if lightning were to strike the field of weeds, a fire could rapidly spread to the houses nearby. Kinnie and Krueger both stated they would like to see the city maintain the weeds as they hold the lease to the land.

If a fire was to occur in the area, Kinnie noted that it would be especially disastrous as there is limited accessibility behind the houses to the three fire hydrants, one of which is blocked by shrubbery.

"It's just a potential fire hazard and it makes me very uneasy to think what would happen," Kinnie said. "I just feel as a citizen of this community, we need to have someone step up to the plate and do something about this."

The next morning, Wednesday, July 3, the city mowed the area and established an access point off of Sunflower Drive through Ag Power's property to reach the utility easement behind the homes in Frenchman Heights.

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Lodging tax discussed

A lodging tax was considered by the city council to include on the upcoming November ballot.

Phillips County economic development director Julie Worley attended the meeting to introduce herself to the council members as well as to relay some of the goals she has while she works in the area. Holyoke Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Scott praised Worley, saying that “in the last six months, I have seen her do more in the position than in the last two years.”

While at the meeting, Worley expressed her support for the lodging tax as it generates more money for the city from those who pass through. Worley stated that La Junta, which is roughly twice the size of Holyoke, generates about \$40,000 a year through the lodging tax.

“This is a great way to get some revenue coming in,” said Worley.

The council will continue the discussion on the lodging tax at the July 16 meeting to determine if the tax should be utilized and at what percentage the tax should be set.

City officials report

Holyoke Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that from June 13-26, the department generated 61 calls for service, made one arrest, gave out three citations, wrote five reports and gave out

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11 warnings.

City Superintendent Mark Brown reported that there has been three recent power outages. Two of the outages were on June 23 and one on July 1. Two of the outages were caused by squirrels while the other one was caused by a faulty pole.

Other business

In other business July 2, the council:

—appointed Helen Murray and Erica Ayoub to three-year terms on the Board of Variance Adjustment.

—appointed Richard Brown to another five-year term on the Housing Authority Board.

—approved request from Holyoke School District to waive labor costs for the underground power line for the new track project.

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