

Employees dissatisfied with sick-leave policy

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Five city employees made their case heard for changes to the city sick-leave policy at the Tuesday, Nov. 5 Holyoke City Council meeting.

“It was brought to our attention on the 10th of October that the way we were using it was wrong,” said Rich Wittman, regarding the sick-leave policy for city employees. “We were told to use it on ourselves, and we have been using it for 20-plus years if our kids were sick, if our wife needed to go to the doctor or the dentist, and now we’re told we can’t.”

Jeremy Thompson presented the board with three personnel policies for local businesses roughly the same size or larger than the city department, including Highline Electric Association, Holyoke schools and Phillips County.

“Some actually use it for much more than what we’re asking,” Thompson said. “We’re just asking to be able to take our kids to the dentist, stay home with a young kid if they’re sick, be able to take our wives to a dentist or to a doctor if there is some safety issue, without having to take vacation.”

Thompson added that he believes the policy was intended to cover these types of scenarios, and Wittman explained that employees were instructed that they could use sick days for family when they were first hired.

Mayor Orville Tonsing stated that a committee would be formed to review the policy and that a decision would most likely be made before the next scheduled council meeting.

Council member Kevin Scott noted that he can see where the guys are coming from as he and his wife split days at home when a child was sick. Scott, along with fellow council member J.C. Peckham and city attorney Al Wall, volunteered to be on the committee responsible for reviewing the policy.

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Officials report

City superintendent Mark Brown reported that there was one power outage on the west side of town Saturday, Oct. 19 in which repairs to a breaker south of the park were necessary. He also informed council members that city crews have been working to remove leaves, blow out sprinklers and replace the roof on the cemetery well house and have begun to get Christmas lights ready as they will go up in the next few weeks.

Brown reminded council members that the 2014 airport grant has been sent in for the improvement program project for the construction of the parallel taxiway. Of the \$1,093,515 price tag, the city is responsible for \$74,989. A precipitation gauge at the airport also needs replaced at an estimated cost of \$1,000.

Drawings for the mini park located on the southeast corner of the stoplight were also passed around by Brown. Misty Hielscher completed the drawings which will now be presented to the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce and the Lions Club for feedback.

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that from Oct. 10-30, the police department had received 123 calls for service. He also mentioned that the dog that bit two pedestrians in October has since had its rabies shot and has been licensed.

Bergstrom and Wall also discussed possible ways to deal with three trailers at the mobile home park west of the airport that were in disrepair before April's storm knocked them off their foundations.

The trailers have yet to be removed and the city does have the option of going in to remove them and to send the owner of the mobile home park the bill. However, council members want to make sure they are not left on the hook for the costs.

Writing a ticket to summon the owner to court is a possibility that is being considered.

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Other business

In other business Nov. 5, the council:

—renewed the liquor license for K.S. Plus, Inc. (Kwik Stop).

—approved a purchase request for a glass door at the pool from All American Glass at a cost of \$2,625.

—accepted a bid from Vap Construction out of Atwood, Kan., for a new pole shed for \$33,170 and overhead doors for \$8,490.

—accepted a bid from Triple J Tree Service, Inc. for tree removal, stump grinding and soil at the Heginbotham Library for no more than \$3,275.

—assigned Steve Moore to represent the city at Holyoke Chamber of Commerce meetings.

—designated Wall, Brown and Brian Akey to a committee to adopt a new ordinance to ensure inclusion in the flood insurance program.

—entered a budget work session immediately following the meeting.

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