

Council wants tree-enhanced entrance into Gothenburg

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Wednesday, 28 October 2009 21:54 -



City to apply for shade streets grant.

Gothenburg's tree-lined streets have long been admired by both visitors and residents.

At a meeting Oct. 20, local city council members decided to continue the beautification of the community with trees—this time along Highway 47 from north of the Cozad Canal to 10th Street.

Council members gave the go ahead to apply for a federal Shade Our Streets grant along the heavily traveled entrance into town.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said the \$17,575 project would mean the buying and planting of 45 large, maturing trees on both sides of the highway.

If funded, the federal Community Enhancement Program would pay 80%, or \$14,060, while Central Platte Natural Resources District could fund the remaining \$3,515 if a city application is approved.

Clymer noted that the city has received preliminary approval from state officials to use highway right of way for the trees.

"Their concern is if it affects the highway," he said, noting that the only land not on highway right of way is property where the Nebraska Department of Roads is located.

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Jeff Kennedy, city council president, hopes the city receives the grants but said forest service officials notice who has already received grants for trees.

“They might see we already got money for the cemetery trees,” Kennedy said. “If we don’t get it, we might consider resubmitting the application the following year.”

Kennedy reminded the council that the planting of trees along the corridor is also in the city’s comprehensive plan.

In the application for the federal grant, it states that Gothenburg has been a Tree City USA for more than 20 years.

Written by the local tree board, the application also points out the lack of trees along the community entrance has been noted in several surveys and the goal “to create gateway features into the community along major highways” has been prioritized.

Tree board members point out that the community planners who facilitated the comprehensive plan said that visitors do not see the beauty of Gothenburg until they are in the town proper.

The tradition of planting trees along Winchell Street—now Lake Avenue—began in 1897 followed by the building of irrigation ditches to water them in 1900, according to the Gothenburg Area History book.

Three years later, the local newspaper wrote, “The city council this year started out right by having shade trees put out and by furnishing us with water for trees and lawns as well.”

On another matter and following a public hearing, the council gave Kandi Stickelman a special use permit to operate a home-based business at 802 16th St.

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Stickelman told the council she wants to open Kandi's Skin Spa where she'll offer chemical peels, air-brush tanning and related services.

The planning and zoning commission had recommended approval of the permit.

In other business, the council:

- approved a draw down of \$6,569 for payment to Miller & Associates Engineering Consulting of Kearney for street improvements on 22nd and 23rd streets in 2008.
- passed on first reading an ordinance to open an alley north of Jefferson Street between Avenues J and L behind newly constructed CROWN (Credit to Own) homes. Clymer said he thought the alley should be opened so trash can be picked up behind the houses instead of in front of them as it is now. Mayor Joyce Hudson said the city has had problems in residential areas without alleys.
- set the date for the city employee recognition dinner. It will be Jan. 15, 2010, at the city shop.
- learned that doors installed into city council chambers and the police department meet American Disability Act requirements. Clymer said 75%, or \$5,000 of the \$7,050 cost, was financed through downtown revitalization funds with the city paying \$2,050.
- heard there will be a presentation to the planning and zoning commission about changes in the flood plain Tuesday, Nov. 10, in city council chambers at 5:30 p.m. Bill Jones of the Department of Natural Resources will explain and review the flood plain and its impact. Jones will also be available to visit with affected landowners during an open house from 3-5 p.m.

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