

Efforts to revitalize will move forward

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 29 March 2013 13:41 -

'Ugly' corner to get makeover

The Gothenburg City Council wasted no time at its last meeting giving a downtown revitalization loan to an optometrist and money to spruce up an unsightly corner.

Action followed each of two public hearings, at the council's March 19 meeting, in which Community Development Block Grant reuse funds were approved for the following projects:

Kim Johnson received a \$41,500 low-interest, seven-year loan for Gothenburg Eyecare & Optical, a business she's started in the Gothenburg Discount Pharmacy building.

Mike Bacon urged the council to approve Johnson's request since, he said, the town needs more young professionals.

Citizen Delvin Seil said he thought the community ought to patronize the optometry business "across from the bank."

\$3,800 will be used for the first phase of beautifying the northeast corner of Lake Avenue and Highway 30.

The funds will pay for the cleaning of two building walls and to seal, prime and paint the surface during the first stage.

Later, murals will be painted on the walls and metal signs erected that will contain historical information.

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During the regular meeting, the council decided to spend an additional \$3,768, in excess revenue from the Public Alliance for Public Energy, on improvements to the corner.

The council also put \$11,475 toward development of a downtown assessment plan needed to apply for phase two of a CDBG grant which could bring \$350,000 into the community for downtown revitalization projects.

Of the funds requested, \$9,975 will be used to develop the plan and \$1,500 for administration of the plan by Dawson Area Development.

Included in the amount is \$3,325 in local matching funds that will be provided by the city monetarily or through in-kind efforts.

In related action, during the regular meeting, the council designated a core area of downtown—generally the east edge of the sale barn property west to All Points Cooperative and north of Highway 30 to 11th Street—to apply for the downtown revitalization grant.

The council also designated Mayor Joyce Hudson to sign an application for CDBG funds.

Release of funds for all three projects was recommended by a downtown revitalization committee.

In other action, members waived two readings to pass a hike in electricity and water rates.

On their March utility bills, customers will see an average increase of 5.5% for electricity and 5% for water use.

Steve Peterson, who is co-owner of Peterson's Supermarket, said the increase will be

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noticeable for large businesses and industries.

Steve, and his father, Blaine, resurrected discussion about the need for diagonal, instead of parallel parking, on the west side of Avenue D. The street is on the west side of their supermarket.

The two business owners have brought the issue to the council in past years.

Other businesses in the area, such as Gothenburg State Bank and Gothenburg Discount Pharmacy, have expanded and taken parking spaces away from the grocery store, Steve said.

He wondered whether shrubs and trees in green space on the east end of the pharmacy property could be removed and diagonal parking created which could mean a couple of additional spaces.

“There’s diagonal parking farther down the street and now on Avenue I by the school so it’s not unprecedented to do,” Steve said.

With a new optometrist in the pharmacy building, he said even more parking will be needed.

Steve said he and Blaine would offer to move the trees and shrubs to property they own north of the supermarket.

Rick Zarek, owner of Gothenburg Discount Pharmacy, said he is sympathetic to the parking problem and noted that his employees park in the GSB parking lot south of the pharmacy or on Ninth Street to free up grocery parking.

Even during the store’s busiest time, around 5 p.m., he said he never sees all the spaces taken

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in and along the bank's parking lot.

"And I see a need for green scape and landscape," Zarek said. "It adds value to the lot and business. I'd like to keep it."

Zarek added that he has good relations with the Petersons.

"They bring traffic to us." he said.

The council asked city officials to look into the cost of changing parking into diagonal parking.

Zarek also offered to trim back rose bushes in the green space to make it easier for passengers to get out of their cars when parked along Avenue D.

Hudson said she appreciated the businessmen coming to the meeting and said maybe business owners in the area and city officials need to pay more attention to parking patterns to see if a change is needed.

In other business, the council:

voted to repay \$20,969 to Dawson County after an error was made in the disbursement of KENO funds. The money will come out of the city's KENO fund that has a balance of \$45,000.

approved the following appointments: Cindy Cooper to the cemetery board and Nate Baker and Tim Slack to the tree board.

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