

City forges ahead with landscaping around sign

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 11 December 2009 21:27 -

Council told grant might not be available.

First they were told they would and then that they might not.

However Gothenburg City Council members don't want to wait around until fall to landscape an area around a new entrance and directional sign on the south edge of town.

After discussion at their Dec. 1 meeting, they decided to go ahead with a design so the area—south of McDonald's Restaurant on Highway 47—could be landscaped this spring.

Council president Jeff Kennedy, who owns a landscape business and who will draw up the design, said the city may still get a \$10,900 grant—\$8,720 from the state and \$2,180 in matching funds the city would pay.

Earlier, city administrator Bruce Clymer told the council he'd received a memo from the Nebraska Forest Service that said funding for 2009 had been denied even though Gothenburg had been approved to receive a Community Enhancement Program grant.

CEP grants are through the Nebraska Forest Service that partnered with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.

Kennedy said the federal grants are funneled through the U.S. Department of Transportation into the Nebraska Department of Roads.

"We were approved but the funds are not available," he said, noting that there's still a chance successful applicants might yet get grants in 2010 but they probably won't know until summer.

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Clymer talked about heavy oversight of projects with grant money from the federal highway administration.

He said the same rules for \$2 million projects are applied to \$4,000 plans.

Strict environmental rules are also involved with such grants, Kennedy noted.

Clymer suggested that local tree board members decide what they want to do.

Kennedy said the council needs to figure out if it wants to spend the money without a grant.

Mayor Joyce Hudson indicated she would as did council member Jeff Whiting.

Although the city probably wouldn't be reimbursed for design costs, Kennedy said they still might get money through the landscape grant.

He pointed out that Central Platte Resource District also has a grant for which the city could apply.

Members also talked about paring down the project to \$8,000.

On a related matter, the council learned that base concrete had been poured over brackets on the new directional sign.

Clymer said Stonco officials said lettering that was sanded over needed more time to cure so it blends in with the stone.

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Stonco is the company that sold and etched the stone directional sign.

Employees later covered up the original etching when city officials thought it was too small for passersby to read from the highway.

Stonco then re-engraved the sign in a different place on the monument with larger letters.

On another matter, council members authorized Clymer to pursue an energy efficient and conservation block grant for street lighting.

The city administrator said stimulus money is available through the Nebraska Energy Office to fund lighting projects up to \$250,000 with a 20% match by local governments.

Clymer said he's visited with a sales representative about LED lights which save about 58% in energy costs a year.

LED, light-emitting diodes, use less power and have longer life spans than traditional fluorescent or incandescent bulbs.

Replacement of 400 street lights would cost about \$257,000. A fully funded grant with a 20% match would pay for \$206,080 of the cost, he said.

The city would end up paying about \$51,520 for fixtures for the LED lights, he said.

Clymer said the bulbs are supposed to last 30 years compared to the two to five-year lifespan of bulbs used now.

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“If we were funded with the grant, the project would pay for itself in energy costs alone with the in the first three years,” he said.

The council made a motion for Clymer to apply for the grant.

“Hopefully we’ll be at the top of the list,” he said about getting the application in around the first of December. “I figure it’s a one in 1,000 shot.”

In other business, the council:

- granted a Redevelopment Authority request for sales tax grant money to pay for paving water and sewer improvements on remaining lots in Hilltop Estates subdivision.
- passed a resolution authorizing city officials to sell a digger truck by sealed bid with a minimum bid of \$5,500. Bids will be opened on Friday, Dec. 18, at 2 p.m. in city council chambers. Council members had earlier approved the purchase of a new digger truck for \$134,712 and had planned to sell the old digger truck at a public auction Nov. 28 but didn’t receive a minimum bid of \$7,500.

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