WETTER YEAR FOR FIREWORKS

What a difference a year makes.

Drought last year caused many small grass fires throughout town in the days leading up to and on the Fourth of July when fireworks can legally be detonated, according to local fire chief Mark Ballmer.

Ballmer said rain this summer will make fireworks season much safer.

The city fireworks show is set for dusk on July 4 at Lake Helen.

City council denies request for neighborhood display

Each summer, a group of neighbors gather for a block party.

This year, the group requested special permission for a fireworks display during their annual party on Saturday, July 6—two days after the Independence Day holiday.

At the June 18 meeting of the Gothenburg City Council, Don Graham approached the council and said the neighbors would like to shoot off fireworks for about an hour after dark.

Several neighbors, in the Avenue G area generally between 17th and 20th St., attended the meeting to support Graham.

Police chief Randy Olson said the council couldn't take action on the request because city ordinance forbids the discharge of fireworks after 11:59 a.m. on July 4.

Fireworks can be ignited beginning June 25, from 10 a.m.-11 p.m., until just before midnight on July 4.

Asked why fireworks are discharged after the Firemen's Ball in early June, Olson said he discusses the violation with fire chief Mark Ballmer every year.

"It's illegal and no one can do it," Olson said.

City ordinance states that anyone violating the law can be charged with a misdemeanor and, if guilty, could be fined not less than $35 or more than $500.

Rita Thomalla asked if fireworks could be discharged outside city limits after July 4.

Olson said he didn't know the law in Dawson County concerning fireworks.

On another matter, the council granted permission for the annual Farmer's Market to move from downtown to the east side of Ehmen Park.

Vendor Jody Carlson said the area for the market now, on 10th Street between Lake Avenue and Avenue F, is often hot between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. when produce, baked goods and other items are sold.

"There are tall brick buildings and pavement that bake," Carlson said, noting that wind also tunnels through the area.

She said several older customers don't attend the market because of the heat, noting that the park with its trees and grass is cooler.

"This idea originated from customers," Carlson said.

In Ehmen Park, vendors would park their vehicles along Avenue F and set up tables on the grass between the sidewalk and curb.

Carlson's daughter, Jailyn Strasburg, who sells baked goods and other items with her mother,

said the ambience of the park is inviting.

"For people in my age group, it's more stroller friendly and has a playground and rest rooms and better parking," Strasburg said.

The market is July 11 through Sept. 26.

Students return to class in August and the market would be along the school route, said council member Tim Strauser.

Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce director Anne Anderson said other things could be planned in the park during the market like kids' games.

Initially, Anderson said the Farmer's Market was a retail committee project to bring people downtown but noted that many businesses close at 5 p.m.

"Our request is to try and see how it works and if it doesn't, we'll address it," she said.

As long as Avenue F isn't closed for the market and vendors and customers stay out of the street, Olson said he and Ballmer have no objections.

However Olson did note that Avenue F is a high traffic area where vehicles often travel faster than they should.

Another concern was blockage of Avenue F intersections by vendor vehicles and campers.

Anderson said the manager in charge of the market would tell vendors where to park.

Pedestrian crosswalk signs, asking motorists to yield, will be provided by the city.

In other action, the council gave Gary Mroczek the go-ahead to place a temporary building on city right of way across the street north of Pony Express Chevrolet.

The 24 x 60-foot building will be placed on Fifth Street next to China Red restaurant and will serve as office space.

Mroczek, who owns the business with wife Deb Mroczek, requested placement of the building while the car dealership is remodeled.

City ordinance allows temporary structures incidental to construction work but only for the period of work which Mroczek estimated would be six months.

If Mroczek receives permission to cut down a tree from China Red owners, the building will be placed closer to a power pole to the west and farther from Lake Avenue.

Otherwise, Mroczek said he'll place concrete barricades around the structure that would jut halfway into the street.

Because Fifth Street is not heavily traveled, Olson said he has no problem with the request, adding that half of the street by the building could be closed if needed.

Mroczek said he hopes construction can begin around July 1.

The council also passed an ordinance on first reading dealing with contiguous lot agreements.

The proposal states that all or part of adjoining lots or parcels owned together cannot be split to be sold.

Cty clerk Connie Dalrymple said Monday that if someone wants to build onto their house, without violating city setback requirements, they can buy an adjoining lot and do it but both lots then become one parcel and must be sold that way.

"It's for aesthetics and fire protection," she said.

At the meeting, Dalrymple said she'd add the notation to building permits.

Building permits are also on county records and would include the ordinance.

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