

Five homes in city could be rehabilitated

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 10 April 2014 16:49 -

Demolition of two other structures could pave way for more housing

The restoration of five homes in Gothenburg looks likely.

To facilitate this process, the Gothenburg City Council is applying for two sources of funds for owner-occupied housing—from the Nebraska Affordable Housing Program and a Community Development Block Grant.

Following a public hearing at the council's April 1 meeting, members approved the necessary paperwork.

Ginger Featherngill, West Central Development District housing specialist, said \$25,000 for each of five homes can be available for homeowners whose median income qualifies.

"We do a lot of electrical, furnaces, doors and insulation," Feathergill said.

Additionally, \$25,000 to demolish two non-commercial structures is also in the plan.

"We hope to boost the image of the neighborhoods," she said.

Featherngill said funding announcements will be made the end of July.

If Gothenburg gets the funding, homeowner applications would be due in October or November.

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The funding would be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

In other action, the council gave homeowner Dennis Meredith 90 days to show substantial progress in siding his home at 123 Fifth St.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said Meredith received a building permit in 2005 and hasn't completed the project.

Meredith said he recently had a hernia operation and couldn't work on the home.

City building permits are issued with the understanding that work must be finished on a project within 18 months.

On another matter, the council introduced an ordinance that would require rapid-entry key systems for industrial, commercial and other non-residential structures.

Gothenburg fire chief Mark Ballmer described the "knox box" as a small, wall-mounted safe that would hold building keys for the fire department to retrieve in emergency situations.

The fire department would have three master keys to all knox boxes so they could quickly enter a building without having to force entry or call owners to come and unlock their building.

"Fire alarms go off in the middle of the night and we have to wait for the owner to come down," Ballmer explained.

Knox boxes cost between \$285 and \$335 which would be paid for by owners under the ordinance on new buildings.

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Ballmer said several businesses in town already use them, noting that the fire department's contract is through the Knox Company that manufactures the boxes.

During community comments, Kristy Connolly asked the council about buying and installing playground equipment in Ehmen Park that would accommodate toddlers.

"I have an 18-month-old and we like to go outside but the slide there is too high for toddlers," Connolly said.

Council members asked Connolly to research equipment and prices more which would be put on the agenda at another council meeting.

She said she would also look into funding sources.

In other business, the council:

passed, on final reading, an ordinance that rezones Goshen, Goshen Second Subdivision and Reynolds Subdivision from R-2 to R-3 residential to allow for the construction of multi-family homes.

A development company wants to build income-based duplexes for seniors.

granted Jay Lewis permission to block off city streets around Ehmen Park for a car show on June 28 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Proceeds go to the Dawson County Relay for Life.

Lewis said it will be fourth year for the show which attracted 157 entries last year.

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approved a contract with Aaron Pelzer of Gothenburg to open and close graves at the city cemetery subject to the city attorney's approval.

Wade Viter has been the city's grave digger but no longer wanted to do it.

Pelzer will charge \$425 per grave.

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