

City council considers change in sewer billing

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Thursday, 25 February 2010 22:52 -

CITY LIQUOR LICENSE RENEWALS	
Owner, Business	License
Carol Fort, Renaissance Cafe	Bottle club
Morris Komyia, OAK Bottle Shoppe	Package
Norman Lamberton, Bar W Lounge	Bottle club, off-sale beer
Kit Meacham, China Cafe	On-sale beer
Dean Good, Gothenburg Fuel Distributors	Off-sale beer
Chad Kuhn, Lakeside Grill	Bottle club
Cherry Alger, Pete's Lounge	Bottle club
Western States, Inc., Pizza Hut	On-sale beer
R & C Petroleum, Time Saver	Off-sale beer
Steve Walker, Walker's Steakhouse & Lounge	Bottle club, off-sale beer
Panella LLC	Package

On-sale beer is sold and consumed in the business. Off-sale beer is bought and taken from the business. Bottle club means the sale and consumption of alcohol in a business while package is when alcohol is bought and taken from the store.

Heat pump causes high utility bill.

J Buddenberg installed a heat pump at Electric Rain Inc. to conserve energy.

But his sewer bill has increased dramatically.

Buddenberg attended the Feb. 16 Gothenburg City Council meeting to ask if the council would change its utility rate ordinance for heat pumps.

The problem, he said, is caused when water used by the heat pump flows into the city storm sewer.

A percentage of a commercial customer's water use is charged on the sewer bill.

City administrator Bruce Clymer said there's a city ordinance dealing with outside watering that is metered which doesn't drain to the sanitary sewer.

But there isn't one relating to heat pumps.

For outside water, Clymer said a metered customer may be charged a flat sewer rate from April through October which is equal to the highest sewer charge in any one month from November through March.

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“But it doesn’t apply to heat pumps,” he said.

Clymer presented a couple of ideas the council will consider for customers with metered water utilizing a water-source heat pump that dumps into the city storm sewer.

They include:

That the city administrator may require, or the customer may request, a second water meter that can be read remotely and used as a “deduct” reading for water use by a heat pump.

The meter would be billed at the deduct rate and installed at a metering point provided by the customer in front of the heat pump.

That if metering is not required, the customer shall be charged the applicable minimum customer rate or 50% of the water charge—whichever is greater.

Clymer noted that the second suggestion would be simpler to implement but there may be others who want to see how much water heat pumps are using that goes to the sewer.

“I don’t have a magic answer,” he said.

Although Buddenberg is billed for commercial water and sewer use, council president Jeff Kennedy said members might want to look at metering residential customers with heat pumps.

All residential customers are now charged a flat fee for water and sewer.

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Clymer said metering would be an issue as well as finding out who has heat pumps.

However council member Jim Aden suggested focusing on commercial customers first.

Buddenberg offered to supply plumbing to plug in a deduct meter to see how much water his heat pump uses.

“I just want to get the process the started,” he said.

Council members will introduce an ordinance dealing with commercial heat pumps and water usage at their March 2 meeting which will then take two more readings to pass.

On another matter, the council discussed an increase in lot fees at the Gothenburg City Cemetery as recommended by the city cemetery board.

Council members will vote on the increase at their March 2 meeting.

If approved, fees will increase from \$100 to \$200 for local residents and from \$200 to \$250 for non residents.

Cemetery board chair Don Abbot said the increase in lot fees will help pay for sidewalks underneath monuments in new areas of the cemetery.

Gruber said the sidewalks could decrease costs for maintaining the cemetery and may prevent the heaving and settling of monument foundations.

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In other action, the council:

approved automatic liquor license renewals (see chart).

awarded a bid of \$103,220 with trade-in for a 2010 John Deere loader to Murphy Tractor of North Platte.

Other bidders with trade in were: Fairbanks International of Lexington for a 2010 New Holland, \$97,000; and Nebraska Machinery of North Platte for a 2010 Caterpillar, \$111,886.

Council members decided on the John Deere loader because the city crew liked it.

hired Schemmer Associates for \$69,715 to come up with a transportation plan for the city.

Clymer said the city budgeted \$60,000 for the study of which the Dawson County Railroad Transportation Safety District will pay for \$45,000 and maybe more.

passed on second reading updated city codes, zoning and subdivision regulations.

agreed to pay \$7,421 to Gothenburg Realty for improvements from the downtown revitalization fund.

renewed an annual agreement with the Nebraska Department of Roads to maintain state highways through Gothenburg.

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voted to draw down \$2,000 to pay Dawson Area Development for administrating a Community Development Block Grant for downtown revitalization funds; another draw down of \$14,921 from the downtown revitalization fund and \$3,300 to DAD for administrating a CDBG grant for 2008 street improvements.

endorsed Terry Kruse Construction of Cozad as the contractor for the owner-occupied housing project in Gothenburg.

The project is \$19,993 with the United States Department of Agriculture's contributing \$7,500.

learned that the city has applied for a Nebraska Energy Office grant for LED lighting which uses less power and has a longer life span than traditional bulbs. A sample light will be installed at the intersection of Countryside Lane and Avenue M for the public to see.

heard that Gothenburg is celebrating a 125th birthday this year and that plans are in the works to dig up a time capsule buried in Ehmen Park.

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