

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
JANUARY 24, 2022

Charles City city council met in a planning session on January 24, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Mayor Dean Andrews presided and the following council members were present: Keith Starr, Patrick Lumley, DeLaine Freeseaman, Phoebe Pittman and Phillip Knighten. Also present were city administrator Steve Diers and city engineer John Fallis.

Tim Fox, ADC director, gave a review of activities and accomplishments from this past year. The former Oliver park has been sold, it was a very complex transaction. A new business will be operating out of there soon. There were 4 revolving loans that were done this year and they are also looking at starting a micro loan program as well. The most recent accomplishment is receiving the AEDO designation. We are the second area development organization in the state to receive this designation and the 69th in the world. Marketing of the Avenue of the Saints certified site continues. They have done paper and website advertising and plan to market to site selectors next. They are installing 14 furnaces through the furnace replacement program. He thanked the city and the state for their part in the southwest development park drainage project, that has helped the water issues there tremendously. Council member Freeseaman asked Fox what he thinks would be the best fit for a business at the certified site and Fox replied probably a warehouse or distribution center given the close proximity to the avenue.

Mark Wicks, Chamber/Main Street Charles City director, gave an update of activities in his offices this past year. The change to Main Street Charles City came with a necessary change in logo and other advertising. We continue to log a large number of volunteer hours as part of the Main Street program, which keeps us toward the top of the best Main Street Iowa communities. The last two years, there has been a decrease in events due to COVID. Mark also thanked the city for their continued support, there are other Main Street communities that don't have a good relationship with their city. A new joint website for the Chamber and Main Street went live a week ago. It's much more user friendly. The business dues have been revamped and are now based on what level of service you want to receive. Mark asked the city to consider becoming a Chamber member. The Chamber helped install public seating downtown. They were also the recipient of a \$150,000 Great Places grant for the depot project. One very good note is that Charles City did not have any downtown businesses close due to COVID.

Possible changes to the Façade program guidelines was discussed. After a property in town received back to back **Façade grants for basically the same project (siding on multiple sides)**, council decided we may want to revamp the program requirements. Mark Wicks and council member Freeseaman worked together to come up with some suggestions for changes. They stayed away from trying to define what a project is and also didn't want to penalize property owners who were aggressively trying to improve their **business façade**. **They are recommending the following: no more than 2 grants in one year and no more than a total of \$15000 between the two grants.** If they do get the two grants in a year, then they have to wait 3 years to apply again. Councilmember Pittman voiced concern about the three year wait to apply again possibly hindering some business owners. How many applicants have received multiple back to back grants? Wicks replied that 4 or so come to mind right away. We average probably 5 or 6 projects each year and have \$35,000 earmarked for these grants each year. Councilmember Pittman stated that she agrees with the \$15000 cap but would like allow more than 2 grant awards to get to that. Mayor Andrews commented that he doesn't want to penalize separate good projects on the same building and that we should give the design committee discretion and trust them to deny to projects that may not fall within the requirements. Wicks noted that a lot of property owners can't afford to do one large project and need to break it down into phases in order to do the project. Mayor Andrews suggested that the council think about this subject for awhile and we can revisit it later. Much discussion on how to word the requirement about not allowing for similar projects to be funded back to back and to word the new language so that the design committee has the ability to turn down a project if it doesn't fit the requirements. Mayor Andrews asked Wicks and Council member Freeseaman to work on the changes again, using the discussion tonight to draft their recommendations. We can then discuss this at the next planning session.

A façade application has been submitted from Snap Fitness for new signage. The corporate leaders have changed the logo for the company so signs have to be replaced. The total estimated cost for this is

\$10,967.90 and Snap Fitness is requesting 50% of that, or \$5,483.95. It was asked if corporate will be reimbursing for any of these costs and Mark did not know but will find out before this is brought to council for action at the next regular meeting.

The baseball field lease with Zoetis is up for renewal. We are recommending leaving the terms the same. We have not received confirmation back from Zoetis on this but expect to before the next regular meeting.

Staff is suggesting that we change the schedule for our workshop meetings. It would be easier to have our planning sessions on Wednesdays rather than the first one on a Monday and the second one on a Wednesday. So we would meet the second Wednesday after the first Monday and then the second Wednesday after the second regular meeting. Council consensus was this was okay.

City administrator Diers commented that the current levy sheet is on the agenda packet online for the budget meeting tomorrow night.

There being no further business, meeting was adjourned.

Dean Andrews, Mayor

Attest:

Trudy O'Donnell, City Clerk