

Trash talks intensify

To stay in the commercial trash business or not — and possibly eliminating the jobs of two public works employees in the process — is a question the members of the Platte City Board of Aldermen will be considering in the near future.

The Board has been hearing from several business owners since late last year about allowing owners to contract private trash service instead of relying on City Dumpster service.

Many of those same business owners and spokesmen were back at the meeting Tuesday evening, to reiterate their concerns with the City trash service.

Tim Heuback, QuikTrip division manager, said the Platte City location pays \$18,000 per year for trash service for its Dumpsters, as opposed to locations in Pleasant Valley or Oak Grove that average \$6,000 per year. He suggested the City get out of the commercial waste business, or allow commercial accounts to use private service.

City Administrator Keith Moody presented two possible ways for the City to get out of commercial trash hauling to the Board of Aldermen.

In one scenario, the residential curbside pickup fee would have to be increased by 90 cents to offset the loss of commercial Dumpster “tip” revenue. Commercial fees would be dropped from \$13.10 to empty a three-yard Dumpster to \$12.10. The fee for one “tip” of a six-yard Dumpster would be lowered from \$26.20 to \$16.65.

The second option called for the elimination of all commercial Dumpster service, two full-time employees and a side-loading refuse truck. No increase in residential rates would be necessary, Moody said, though a rate increase still may be necessary in the future.

Alderman Andy Stanton said he favored the second option.

“We live in a free-market society and this is just flat ridiculous,” he said.

Mayor Dave Brooks said he did not favor any option that would raise residential rates.

Moody said even with a 90-cent increase, which would raise the residential rate to \$12.70 per month, Platte City would remain competitive with other cities providing similar curbside service.

Alderman Ken Brown said he would like to see a timetable for elimination of commercial service and alternate plans to possibly absorb the two employees and possible other budgetary consequences before coming to a decision.

List forming for interview committee

Platte City’s Board of Aldermen is accumulating a list of potential candidates to fill spots on an interview panel. The panel would help the Board in the hiring of a new city administrator. Last month, the Board voted to terminate longtime City Administrator Keith Moody’s employment. Subsequently, the Board and Moody negotiated terms of a transition period which could lead to Moody working until July 31 or the City paying him six months severance pay and benefits.

A list of 17 names was presented to the Board at its meeting Tuesday night. Names were submitted by five of the six aldermen. Todd Sloan, who was absent from Tuesday’s meeting, did not make any submissions. The list includes a mix of City residents and business owners, including Rob Barmann, of Wells Bank, Chamber director Karen Wagoner, Platte County Commissioner Betty Knight and business owners Ron Pine, Olin Miller and Brad Clark.

The Board set a special meeting for 7 p.m. Feb. 19 to pare down the list. Other business at the meeting will include a review of applicants for the city administrator position — City Clerk Amy Hubbard said 27 resumes had been received so far — and to discuss whether the City needed to hire a recruiting service. Board President Aaron Jung also told the Board that he had contacted Olsson & Associates, located in Riverside, a firm that provides interim services to cities during the hiring process.

Jung said his inquiries with the firm did not mean he was in favor of terminating the transition agreement with Moody.

“This is just another option for the Board, in the event we find ourselves without a city administrator,” he said. “I believe we should have a contingency plan in place if our current plans fall through.”

In other action concerning Moody, the Board voted 4-1 to approve the ordinance ratifying the terms of the transition agreement. The Board rejected Alderman Andy Stanton’s motion to rewrite the ordinance to include additional language prohibiting Moody from seeking any future litigation against the City.

Dearborn drainage, zoning draws complaints

Continuing citizen concerns about stormwater drainage, parking and zoning regulations took up most of the attention of the Dearborn Board of Aldermen Monday evening.

Resident Jamie Morey spoke to the Board about water standing in his yard. He believes the increased runoff and resulting standing water is due to four homes recently built near his property. He came before the Board last month with the same concern and said conditions had not improved.

Alderman Luke Thies said he didn’t believe there was a good way to control the water. Board members believed the area had always had run-off problems, but Morey felt they had been made worse by the nearby construction and the City was responsible as they had issued the building permits.

Thies said the City had issued the permits, but didn’t have jurisdiction over how the builder built on the property so long as it was within existing codes.

“As far as the City saying the builder would have to build a retaining wall, we can’t do that,” Thies said. Morey said he was increasingly frustrated with the water and the City’s reaction and was considering pursuing other options to force the City to take care of the drainage. The Board said they would look into the matter, and check on a drainage tube in the area that residents said had been blocked during the construction.

Also last month, resident Jamey Hoffman asked if she could take possession of a dead-end alley by her home. She had maintained the small alleyway for several years, and her garage had been partially built in the City-owned alley by a previous owner. She and her husband now wish to build a new garage and she suggested the City abandon the alley to her and the adjoining property owner. City attorney Vic Peters said he would have to look into the legal action required of the City if it did indeed vacate the alley, and any property owners with an interest in the area would have to be consulted.

Alderman Larry Wilmes said he had spoken to the property owner across the alley, and he was agreeable to splitting the alley. However, the property was up for sale and the Board believed the sale may have closed Monday. Wilmes said the new property owner would have to be consulted.

Peters was absent from the meeting, and City Clerk Cindy Atkison said she would contact him regarding abandonment procedures.

The Hoffmans also sought a building permit for their new garage, but the Board said the garage’s location in the alley might be problematic unless it was built to exactly the same dimensions, in which case it would

be grandfathered into the City's building codes. If they wanted to make it larger, they would have to obtain a planning and zoning variance.

"There are a lot of things that need to be varied in this town," Hoffman said. She believed the zoning codes were being unevenly enforced.

Part of the problem with City codes enforcement has arisen from the City not having a planning and zoning commission or an active codes enforcement officer for several years. The Board approved the printing of code violation forms and stickers and an identification badge and uniform shirt for the officer. Thies said the City may also want to consider buying a digital camera to allow the officer to take photos of nuisance properties. Timestamped photographs would provide better evidence to bring nuisances to municipal court. Hoffman said she had also had a problem recently with large vehicles, both trucks and large SUVs, parked diagonally in front of a beauty salon in downtown Dearborn.

In December, the Board reversed a decision by a previous board of aldermen to ban diagonal parking in front of a downtown beauty salon after the business owner complained it was detrimental to her business. The City decided to again allow diagonal parking, contingent upon the installation of signs banning trucks from parking in the spots. The signs were installed within the last few weeks, but audience members said the trucks were still parking there.

"There are trucks there, and there are no cops around in the middle of the day, so what are we supposed to do?" Hoffman said. "Can they be ticketed?"

Mayor Frank Downing said they could ticket trucks parked there in violation of the no-trucks signs, and Wilmes said he would speak to the business owner about curbing truck parking as well. Karlton Nash, the chair of the City park board, asked the City pledge matching monies for a Platte County Parks and Recreation Outreach grant. The City has applied for a \$65,000 grant to build an asphalt parking lot at Dean Park, with the City contributing \$15,000. The Board unanimously approved the request.