

Recruiter hired; trash bill OK'd

At its meeting Tuesday night at City Hall, Platte City's Board of Aldermen settled two issues which had been on the table for weeks.

But it didn't come easy.

Discussion was at times heated as the Board voted on whom to hire for recruitment consulting services in its search for a new city administrator and on a bill making the City's elimination of commercial Dumpster service official.

Regarding the former, Alderman Todd Sloan made the motion to hire Robert Saunders Organization Consultants, a firm out of Liberty whom the City had done business with previously and has had extensive experience in recruiting municipal management personnel.

Alderman Marsha Clark and Ron Stone sided with Sloan. Aldermen Aaron Jung and Andy Stanton — both of whom wanted to hire People Wise of Platte City — and Ken Brown voted against Sloan's motion. With the vote deadlocked at 3-3, the onus fell on Mayor Dave Brooks to cast the deciding vote. Brooks opted for Saunders.

Discussion leading up to the vote showed how divided the Board was.

"We've got a recruiter with a proven record that we've worked with before," Sloan said in defense of Saunders.

"We've got a company here in Platte City that can assist us," Stanton said of People Wise.

Both firms made prior presentations to the Board. People Wise offered the lowest bid at \$10,300, which included advertising fees. Saunders initial bid was \$10,400 and did not include advertising fees. Both parties adjusted their bids. People Wise said it would negotiate with the City as it had already done much of the legwork. Saunders said he would knock \$500 off his bid.

Stone said the money was not the deciding factor.

"This is an important decision," he said. "If we need to spend more money to get the most experienced people to help us, that's what we need to do."

Kevin Robinson, owner of People Wise, spoke to the board.

"I appreciate the position the Board is in and also appreciate the chance to be heard," he said. Robinson added that his offer was still good if the Board chose to reconsider.

Through the end of February, the City had received more than 30 applications for the post, which became open when the Board and Moody settled on a severance/transition agreement in January. Moody could remain with the City until July 31 or the City hires his replacement

At the end of the agenda, the Board discussed a resolution asking it to reconsider its approval of a bill Feb. 26 that will privatize commercial Dumpster service in the City limits. The resolution was put on the agenda after Mayor Dave Brooks vetoed the bill, which passed by a 4-2 margin.

Brooks said several concerns had been brought to his attention by business owners, including what businesses could do with Dumpsters purchased from the City, more big truck traffic resulting from outside trash companies and the City's failure to consult with all businesses via a survey.

Stanton, who initially brought the issue to the Board weeks ago, defended the action to cut the service. He said businesses should have the right to choose who they want to provide Dumpster service and that the City's rates are too high for businesses.

"Who's going to do a survey?" he said. "And who would ever say no to cheaper trash service?"

Stanton also said that he had talked with a representative of a private company "who said they already have 10 customers signed up. He also said they would work with businesses on some kind of Dumpster trade-in."

Some members of the audience also spoke up, including City public works employee Brian Allen, whose job is one of two that will be eliminated by the Board's action.

"I've been hauling trash for 20 years," he said. "Two or three years from now, those private companies' rates will go up, too."

Jung then urged Brooks to "provide some order here, with only one person speaking at a time."

Brown suggested the Board vote on the ordinance. The Board did, and despite Brooks' veto, voted again 4-2 to privatize the service. Stanton, Brown, Jung and Sloan voted in favor, with Stone and Clark again voting against.

The ordinance is set to take effect April 27, though the Board may consider pushing back that date to give businesses more time to make arrangements. The Board also instructed Moody to send out a letter to all commercial Dumpster business customers telling them of the Board's decision and offering guidelines on how to contract outside companies.

The Citizen is planning to conduct its own survey of City businesses that require Dumpster service. When told of that, Stone, on his way out the door of City Hall, said, "Good. I think that needs to be done."

P&Z works late

Consideration of the controversial Brentwood Parc subdivision in southern Platte County kept the County Planning and Zoning Commission busy late into the night Tuesday.

As of 11:15 p.m., no vote had been taken on the matter, which was heard in front of a standing room only crowd at the County Administration Building.

Developer Jim Owens submitted a revised rezoning application to Platte County Planning and Zoning last month, marking the fifth time in total the Brentwood Parc development has been submitted for consideration by the Commission. The rezoning requests have been denied three times previously, due to public concerns about density, traffic and other matters.

The new plan calls for 115 lots over a little more than 78 acres and includes additional tracts of open space and a slightly different rezoning request to a planned residential development for single-family homes.

Director of Planning and Zoning Daniel Erickson said after review by County staff, they recommended approval of the plan, with several conditions including road improvements, stormwater and maintenance standards and review and approval of any additional plans by County staff and the County Commission. Weatherby Lake resident and attorney Bill Quitmeier led the presentation by the opposition, stating this version of the Brentwood Parc plan contained many of the same flaws as previous plans.

Earlier in the meeting, the commissioners denied the preliminary plat for the Beverly Plaza development off Highway 92. The commercial development, proposed by Alexander Dudley, is a 16.5-acre, five-lot development on Highway 92 just east of the Beverly Hills Antique Center.

The proposal did comply with the County's Land Use Plan, and despite some concerns about the availability of sanitary sewer service to two of the lots, County Planning and Zoning recommended approval of the plat.

The Weston Board of Alderman last year approved a resolution opposing the plan. Weston Alderman Greg Hoffman spoke on behalf of the City, saying while the City was not opposed to the development itself, they were opposed to the layout of the plan. The City also feared a commercial cluster at the intersection of Highways 92 and 45 would mar the scenic appeal and rural appearance of the drive to Weston.

Residents vent at Dearborn meeting

The Dearborn Board of Aldermen met Monday evening with a packed audience in attendance, and spent more than one hour of its 90-minute-long meeting listening to resident complaints, requests and comments. Many of the complaints concerned ongoing issues, such as Jamey Hoffman's request to take ownership of an old City alley near her home. The alley, she said, dead-ended, and she had maintained it for many years.

In January, she asked the City to abandon the alley so she and an adjoining homeowner could take possession of their respective halves of the alleyway.

In January, the Board said they would look into abandonment procedure, but this month no member of the Board would answer her when she asked if the abandonment could proceed.

A previous homeowner had built a carport in the alley, possibly in the 1940s, and the Hoffmans wished to replace the carport with a new structure. They sought a building permit, but also wanted to expand the carport. To do so, they would extend it further into the City right-of-way and it made sense to them to take ownership of the alley they had already maintained for years.

Mayor Frank Downing said City maps showed the alley connected to another alley behind the property, but Hoffman said there were no driveable surfaces on the alleys.

Downing said if homes were built on the property behind the Hoffmans, the alleys could be used for emergency vehicle access.

"I don't think the City is interested in abandoning it," Downing said. "I know I'm not in favor of abandoning that alley or any other. The City is growing and if that area is developed we would need those alleys."

Since the City was unwilling to abandon the alley, Hoffman asked if she could receive a zoning variance to build her carport. Peters said the City legally could not grant Hoffman a variance to build on City property.

The burned-out and collapsing Lil Depot restaurant downtown was again a subject of concern for residents Monday. Peters said he had not been authorized by the City to begin condemnation proceedings on the building.

The building has a tangled history, beginning when it burned several years ago. The City began to prosecute the owner to force repairs, with little result. The owner would tell the municipal judge she would demolish the building, then not do it and be found in contempt of court. She would pay the fine, and the building still stood.

Earlier this year, the building went up for tax sale on the Platte County Courthouse steps and was purchased by an attorney in Parkville. However, the previous owner has two years to reclaim the property. Additionally, another local family holds a deed to the property, and several liens have been set against it as well.

In January, Peters said the City's recourse now is to seek a formal condemnation as a nuisance through either the City court or Platte County Circuit Court. The City itself could then safely tear down the building.

"We can't just tear it down and throw it in the dump," said Alderman Luke Thies. The City needed to hire an inspector to ensure the building didn't contain asbestos or any other hazardous materials. He had received estimates of up to \$10,000 to demolish the building.

"I suggest we tear it down no matter what the cost," said resident Jim Fox.

Several residents said the City could organize a fundraiser, but City attorney Vic Peters said the City couldn't legally do that. The Dearborn Community Betterment group could, however.

In another continuing issue, 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 has addressed the Board several times regarding the matter, and said a rut has been growing in his yard while nothing has been done.

"We've had a lot of moisture this year and it's been abnormally hard on everything," said Alderman Larry Wilmes. "I know that's not the answer you want."

Residents also complained about snow removal in the City, with one Main Street business owner suggesting the sidewalk on the north-facing end of her building be cleared early to avoid dangerous ice buildup.

Dearborn's Director of Public Works Tim Otto replied to these complaints during his report.

"We've had three times as much snow as usual this year, and I start clearing at 3 a.m.," he said. "I work 10, 12, 13 hours to clear the streets. What do you want me to do, work 16? People have to use common sense with this. We've had heavy rain before these snows, the ground is saturated and water is going to run off. I think I do a good job cleaning off the streets with myself and one other person who is used very sparingly."