



News

Hackensack signs on to submit joint SCDP grant application with Walker

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The Hackensack City Council officially agreed Jan. 5 to submit a joint Small Cities Development Project (SCDP) application with the city of Walker to obtain grand funds in 2010.

If successful, the SCDP grant of about \$620,000 would provide funding to rehabilitate low to moderate income owner-occupied homes, rental housing and/or commercial buildings, Cass County Economic Development Commission (CCEDC) Director Gail Levenson told the council.

A total of 12 commercial properties, 10 owner-occupied homes and four rental properties have been identified for possible rehabilitation in the two cities.

For commercial rehabs, 50 percent would be paid for by SCDP and 50 percent by the owner. For owner-occupied housing rehabs, 80 percent is paid for by SCDP and 20 percent by the owner.

All rehab work would be for health and safety issues, handicapped accessibility or to make buildings more energy efficient. They could include roof replacement, windows, doors, insulation, foundation work, accessible entrances, kitchens, bathrooms, level floors, etc. Each property would be inspected, and an estimate would be drafted by the inspector.

The goal, Levenson said, "is to help maintain good commercial building and affordable housing stock."

At this point, property owners are only being asked to submit letters of interest in participating, which does not commit them to the project. Formal applications would come once the grant is approved.

"We are still looking for more applicants before the grant is submitted Jan. 14," Levenson emphasized. If fewer people are interested, the grant will be rewritten for a lesser amount.

Mayor Mel Rateike commented that several Hackensack residents who might qualify for housing rehab funds are hesitating because they look at the program as "charity." He said he will encourage them to submit letters of interest.

Hackensack residents or business owners who want to learn more should contact Levenson at the CCEDC office in Backus, (218) 947-7522.

Dennis Ganz, representing the Hackensack Trailblazers, again presented the plan for a city website that he first brought to the Council in December. He reminded them that the idea for a website came from a public visioning session in August 2007. The website would be a good economic development tool for anyone who wants information about the city. It would be different from the Chamber of Commerce's website, which focuses on tourism promotion.

"We have other things on the front burner that we need to do more urgently," Rateike stated. "I don't think we can get into this now."

"I beg to differ," Ganz replied. "Any business that wants to move to this city will look for a website." Most nearby cities, such as Longville, Backus and Akeley, have city websites, he pointed out. The Trailblazers would help obtain matching funds for the project.

Despite this, the council declined to move forward on the project at this time but will reconsider it in July or August.

The website would be used to post monthly council minutes, ordinances and policies, fee schedules, meeting notices and similar information.

The council approved the following requests for the Jan. 22-24 Back to Hack Winter Festival: permission for a bonfire Friday night at city park; permission to shoot off fireworks Friday night on Birch Lake; and permission for beer and

liquor sales at the fire hall Saturday night during the Snowflake Pageant.

The following 2010 appointments and stipulations were approved:

Acting mayor, water/sewer superintendent, Larry Ciha; park commissioner, Janice Pfarr; street commissioner, Dave Sack; liquor store commissioner, Mel Rateike; public safety commissioner, Gus Kaubisch; weed inspector, Dave Hoopman; emergency management directors, Kaubisch, Butch Moore, Dana Stanko and Tim Rudolph; assessor, Cass County; city depositories, First National Bank and Bank Forward; official newspaper, Pilot-Independent; auditor, Matthias Justin CPA; attorney, Ted Mellby; city engineer, Mateffy Engineering; mileage reimbursement rate, 55 cents per mile (the current IRS rate).

In other matters the council

Accepted a \$500 donation from the Chainsaw Carving Invitational proceeds from Mike Henning and Dan Meier of the Hackensack Chamber of Commerce, to be used to fix the city ballfields.

Accepted a \$500 donation from the Hackensack American Legion for Back to Hack fireworks and approved that expenditure to the Chamber for the same purpose.

Renewed the American Legion's gambling license.

Renewed the liquor liability policy through Wells Fargo Insurance at \$3,445.02, up \$130 from last year due to increased sales.

Approved the following fund transfers: \$5,000 from general fund to park fund; \$500 from general fund to community building fund; \$5,000 from sewer fund to TIF Fund; and \$6,200 from water fund to TIF Fund.

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