

**March 21, 2023
Jackson, Minnesota**

The Jackson City Council met in regular session in the Council Chambers of City Hall and also by Teleconference and Zoom at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 with the meeting called to order by Mayor Marcus Polz. On the roll call, the following persons were present in-person, Mayor Marcus Polz, Alderwoman Sara Mix and Aldermen Mark Titus, Chris Naumann, Brandon Finck, Nathan Peterson and Joe Pell. Also attending in-person were City Administrator Matt Skaret, City Attorney Brad Anderson, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, Janette Simon from Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Engineer Maria McCarty of SEH, Luke Ewald of Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services, Jackson Fire Chief Dave Bond, Jackson First Assistant Fire Chief and Park Board Chairman Michael Haeffner, Stephen Foster, Lee Porter, Mitch Jasper, Nathan Janzen, Pastor Ted Carnahan from Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Jackson, Justin Lessman of the Jackson County Pilot and Matthew Grisham of KKOJ/KUXX Radio. Joining the meeting via Teleconference was City Clerk/Council Secretary Dave Maschoff. (A quorum of the City Council was present.)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Polz announced the Pledge of Allegiance would be recited before the City Council meeting was called to order. All those attending the meeting in-person and by Teleconference recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Polz called the regular meeting of the Jackson City Council to order. He said the roll call showed all Councilmembers were present.

There were no Public Hearings, Bid Lettings or Open Forum.

Unscheduled Guests:

Mayor Polz asked if there were any unscheduled guests in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Polz again asked if there were any unscheduled guests in the Council Chambers.

Mayor Polz asked for a third time if there were any unscheduled guests in the audience.

Seeing and hearing no unscheduled guests, Mayor Polz said the Council would move onto the Consent Agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

PETERSON/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Council Discussion Items

WATER PLANT MEDIA FILTER REHABILITATION AND BACKWASH TANK MODIFICATION BIDS

Engineer Maria McCarty of SEH reported three bids were submitted on Thursday, March 16th for the Water Plant Media Filter Rehabilitation and Backwash Tank Modification.

McCarty said the low bid of \$1,027,750.00 was from Wapasha Construction Company, Incorporated of Winona, Minnesota. She noted the engineer's estimate for the project was \$611,350.00. McCarty said the high bid submitted for the project was \$1,173,000.00. She said the middle bid of \$1,049,000.00 was just over \$20,000 more than the low bid.

McCarty said SEH's explanation for why the low bid submitted was so much over the engineer's estimate is because right now there's a lot of inflation, market volatility, a lot of changes in prices and it's difficult to lock down prices for engineer's estimates.

Skaret said the Finance Committee met on Friday, March 17th to discuss the bids. He explained with the bids being so far above the engineer's estimate, the Finance Committee recommended rebidding the project. Skaret said if it had been only a small amount like \$50,000 or \$100,000 over the engineer's estimate, the Finance Committee would have recommended to accept the lowest bid submitted. But Skaret said with the lowest bid hundreds of thousands of dollars over the engineer's estimate, the Finance Committee recommended the City doing their due diligence and rebidding the project and hopefully getting a more acceptable bid.

Pell asked what happens if the City rebids the project and the bids submitted are the same or higher.

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough said the City would have the option to postpone the entire project until next year.

Pell asked to explain to him what the risks would be or what would happen if the project is postponed until next year.

Oxborough said he couldn't explain what may happen with pricing for the project. He said in the meantime the City would continue to basically have the same water quality as it has now until next year. Oxborough said it was discussed that maybe contractors would be a little bit more hungry next year due to the economy. Oxborough said postponing the project for a month, at minimum, to rebid it would hopefully give the City another option. He said other than that, the City can push the project back until next year.

Peterson asked McCarty when the engineer's estimate for the project was done.

McCarty said she believes the engineer's estimate was done last fall. She noted the estimate was updated a little bit before bids were sought but the majority of the estimate was done last fall.

Mix said with the bids submitted being so much higher than the engineer's estimate, the City has to do their due diligence and rebid the project. She said if the City wants to get the project done, they have to make sure it's accurately done. Mix said if the bids are high again next year, the City Council is going to have to make some tough decisions.

Peterson agreed with Mix.

Mayor Polz asked for a motion to rebid the project.

PETERSON/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to reject all bids submitted and authorize rebidding of the Water Plant Media Filter Rehabilitation and Backwash Tank Modification Project.

JACKSON EAST AND WEST WATER TOWER MONITORING PROPOSAL

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough said currently the Water Department pays a monthly subscription of \$333.00 to use two dedicated phone lines from Fusion, formerly known as Century Link, as conductors for a 24-volt DC signal that turns into a pressure reading at each water tower. He explained that signal then reports back to the Water Plant to tell pumps to turn on and off to fill the towers. Oxborough said the yearly cost of the subscription is just under \$4,000. He noted within the last two years, it has become an issue of failing infrastructure on Fusion's end. Oxborough pointed out each year the system becomes less reliable between spring thaw, rain events and aging infrastructure. He said it can occur where there's three days without a working signal resulting in the Water Department personnel manually turning pumps on and off to fill the water towers.

Oxborough noted options for replacing the aging system are radio, cellular or fiber. He said he recommends replacing the system with fiber. Oxborough noted Southwest Minnesota Broadband is already stubbed to both locations and the Water Department currently has a proven application of it working with the #1 lift station.

Oxborough explained there is not a cost-effective option to repeat the current application in a similar fashion. He pointed out the infrastructure of copper line communications, or phone lines, has been replaced with fiber optics. Oxborough said voltage cannot be pushed through fiber since fiber uses infrared light to communicate. He pointed out this will be an operating system that can be built off of with alarms, temperature gauges, controls and the like. Oxborough noted the quote of \$22,710 from In Control to install fiber.

Oxborough said he met with the Finance Committee on Friday, March 17th and the Finance Committee recommended the City Council approve the proposal from InControl.

Oxborough said he has the funds available in his budget to update the monitoring system for both the East and West water towers.

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the proposal from In Control for the monitoring system.

PETERSON/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the proposal from InControl for \$22,710 for the Jackson East and West Water Tower Monitoring System.

STREET DEPARTMENT JCB LOADER QUOTE

Street Superintendent Phil Markman said he and Jackson County Maintenance Foreman Kayle Koep and Assistant Street Superintendent Jared Spaeth traveled to New Richland, Minnesota a couple of weeks ago to look at a 2015 JCB front-end loader to replace the Street Department's 1988 CAT loader. He said a technician at Ziegler worked on the 1988 CAT loader and said it was running on borrowed time considering its age and the number of hours of usage on it. Markman said the technician also noted it's difficult to get replacement parts for it.

Markman said he and Koep met with the Finance Committee on Friday, March 17th. He said the cost of the 2015 JCB front-end loader and all of the attachments would be \$139,970. Markman said the 2015 JCB front-end loader would suit the City's needs for quite some time. He said the plans are to sell the Street Department's current 1988 CAT loader once the attachments are transferred over to the 2015 JCB loader.

Pell said he talked with Kayle Koep about the 2015 JCB loader. He noted Koep said the 2015 loader was started up, operated and there was no smoke or leaks and it appeared to be pretty solid.

Markman said the JCB loader was privately owned by a farm. He explained the farmer was at an auction and put a reserve bid on two loaders expecting to be the successful bidder for one and ended up with both loaders. Markman said the farmer has had the 2015 JCB loader for a year-and-a-half and has only put 10 hours on it. He said it's a very clean loader and there wasn't any grease or oil drops anywhere. Markman said the loader was contracted through Ziegler in Mankato.

Mayor Polz asked if the purchase of a loader had been budgeted for.

Skaret said there will be enough funds in the City's Capital Improvement Fund to cover the purchase.

PETERSON/PELL moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the quote for a 2015 JCB front-end loader from Ziegler in Mankato for \$139,970 as recommended by the Finance Committee.

Markman thanked Mayor Polz and City Councilmembers.

LEE PORTER – CAR CRUISE EVENTS IN JACKSON THIS SUMMER

Porter explained the Jackson Cruisin' Club is a group of local Jackson County individuals that started getting together sometime after last year's Jackson County Fair and the car show the Fair hosted. He said the Jackson Cruisin' Club actually organized and established bylaws and started to meet regularly this year.

Porter said the goal of the Jackson Cruisin' Club is to have a cruise-in type of event every couple of weeks in Jackson to try and promote tourism, enhance and bring people into downtown on a regular bi-weekly basis. He said the whole idea is to do something consistent. Porter noted there are different cruise-in clubs such as the Black Knights in Estherville. He said Henderson, Minnesota has a much better draw for their cruise-in events because of their proximity to Mankato and the Twin Cities. Porter pointed out Henderson has had up to 800 vehicles attend a cruise-in event. He said they don't expect to have an event that big, but the Jackson Cruisin' Club is trying to set up a series of regular cruise-in events.

Porter said the Jackson Cruisin' Club would like to get the City Council's permission so they can organize their events. He said the Cruisin' Club is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and is looking to work with the Chamber on some of the cruise-in events.

Porter said the first cruise-in would be held on Thursday evening, June 8th along with Hot Dog Night to draw people and drivers to downtown Jackson. He said the cruise-in events would then be held every two weeks on Thursdays on June 22nd, July 6th, July 20th, August 3rd and August 17th in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce for Block Party Night. Porter said Chamber Director Corey Christopher has been attending the Cruisin' Club's meetings on a regular basis. He said the August 19th car show would be the final car show of the season to be held at Ashley Park or at the Fairgrounds as part of the Jackson Nationals Racing event.

Porter said there will be a total of seven events with six of them specifically going to be held downtown with the final cruise-in event to be held either at Ashley Park or the Fairgrounds depending on availability.

Porter said as part of the cruise-in events, the Cruisin' Club will be coordinating with different businesses in Jackson to host events during the cruise-in nights. He said live music is being planned for the first cruise-in on June 8th. Porter said the Cruisin' Club has been working with the Jackson Center for the Arts who will be open for all the cruise-in events as well.

Porter said what the Cruisin' Club is requesting from the City, at this point, is permission to close the streets for the cruise-in events. He said the plan is to have Ashley Street as the center point and working out from there depending on what kind of attendance there is for each event. Porter said obviously if there's 20 cars that attend the cruise-in, that event can be situated on one or two blocks. He said if 100 cars attend, then Second Street could be closed from Bailey Street all the way to North Highway. Porter said the request would be to have the street closure available and use what portion of Second Street is needed for each cruise-in event depending on attendance. He said trash cans will be used to keep downtown clean.

Peterson asked Porter what will be the time frame for the cruise-in events.

Porter said the time for the cruise-in events will be approximately from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Skaret asked Porter what time they would request Second Street to be blocked off.

Porter said the street could be closed starting at 5 p.m.

Porter said the Cruisin' Club is also trying to coordinate with the Farmer's Market which is in Ashley Park on Thursday evenings as well. He said the idea is to bring as many groups together that are already doing separate things and coordinating them together. In addition to working with the local restaurants in coordinating events in conjunction with Cruise-in events, Porter said the Cruisin' Club has also discussed bringing in food truck vendors at some point.

Titus asked Porter about coordinating the June 8th cruise-in with Hot Dog Night considering the sheer number of people that are on Main Street along with the cars for the cruise-in.

Porter noted during the past couple of years for Hot Dog Night, there's also been vehicle displays downtown. He said they have worked with the Sheriff's Department who has also had vehicles on display along with the Fire and Ambulance Departments for Hot Dog Night. Porter said Hot Dog Night will be the evening when the most space will be needed.

Porter said for this first year of cruise-ins, they're not expecting a huge turnout but they want the cruise-ins to be something consistent for the vehicle enthusiasts to have a place to come to on a regular basis. He noted summertime is when vehicle enthusiasts get their vehicles out for fun. Porter said the cruise-ins will make Jackson one of the vehicle enthusiasts' destination locations. He said plans are already underway for events for the 2023 cruise-in events.

Finck asked Porter to make sure he coordinates with Street Superintendent Phil Markman regarding the street closures and any other items, such as tables, needed for the cruise-in events.

Porter said he would coordinate with Markman.

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the requested street closures.

TITUS/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the street closures for Second Street (Main Street) for the Vehicle Cruise-in events from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on June, 8th, June 22nd, July 6th, July 20th, August 3rd and August 17th and support from the Street Department for tables and other items needed.

Porter thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers.

Mayor Polz and Councilmembers thanked Porter.

MITCH JASPER – STREETS AND UTILITIES

Jasper said he wanted to discuss streets and utilities with the City Council. First beginning with streets, Jasper explained he has an alley behind his property behind the Historic State Theater.

Jasper said he understands the City is redoing the alleys in Jackson. He said he wants the alley behind his property and behind the movie theatre included in the alley project. Jasper provided Mayor Polz and Councilmembers with pictures of the alleys he was describing. He said there's two alleys. Jasper explained there's an alley behind all the businesses between First Street and Second Street. Jasper noted the alley ends behind the Leach building and the movie theater is across the street.

Jasper said when the movie theatre was built, the alley was cancelled right there but on paper the alley still extends behind the buildings behind the movie theater and then out to the road.

Jasper said if the City is redoing all the alleys, he wants the City Council to consider fixing the alley behind his property. He explained it's a mess behind the buildings in the block with the movie theater. Jasper said it gets muddy and the gravel comes pouring down over his sidewalk onto the street.

Jasper said if the City is going to fix the alleys, he would like the City Council to consider fixing the alley behind his property

Jasper said the second thing he would like the City Council to consider is outlawing tandem-axle trucks on residential streets. He said the City Council and the City did a great job reconstructing South Street. Jasper said South Street is a beautiful, beautiful street. He pointed out there's a gentleman that lives on White Street that has a loaded tandem-axle aggregate truck in front of his house on White Street. Jasper said he's guessing that gentleman is driving from the County Road up Dewey Street and parking it on White Street. He said the City's streets are not built for that type of use.

Jasper said he doesn't know how the City would restrict the truck traffic on residential streets because there are garbage and delivery trucks that use those streets. He suggested maybe some type of permitting, not saying that the City would have to charge for a permit. Jasper said he would suggest the City do something to limit the weight of trucks on the residential streets. He would like the City Council to consider that also.

Moving onto utilities, Jasper said it's time to bring the Electric Department back as a City managed department and end the contract with Missouri River Energy Services to provide management of the City's electric utility maintenance and services. He said the City is paying MRES too much to manage the City's electric service. Jasper said if the City is changing the positions of the Department Managers and everything that goes along with that, the City could have the new Public Works Director manage the Electric Department too.

Jasper asked what doesn't the City have that MRES is doing for the City. He said the City has payroll and they're going to have a manager. Jasper said the City has everything and the City is paying MRES \$300,000 a year. He asked what the actual cost was per year that the City is paying MRES. Jasper also asked who the City Council's representative is on the Utilities Commission.

Skaret said Councilwoman Sara Mix is the Council's representative on the Utilities Board.

Jasper asked how much is the City paying MRES per year?

Skaret said last year the City paid MRES about \$360,000 a year.

Jasper noted \$360,000 a year.

Jasper said since he's been Mayor, he's been fighting this. He it's been 10 or 12 years of the City paying \$300,000 and what do we get out it, management? Jasper said that's something that should be very well looked into because it would be easy to change with the establishment of the new position of Public Works Director that's being advertised. He said the new Public Works Director could be in charge of the City's Electric Department. Jasper said the City Council is going to meet resistance of making the change of having the City manage and operate the Electric Department. He said the Utilities Commission is in bed with MRES and they voted against the citizens of Jackson every time. Jasper said the City's electric rates doubled since he's been Mayor and not one person has jumped up and down. He said he was jumping up and down when he was Mayor saying we have to stop this from the top. But, Jasper said no one is stopping this.

Jasper told Mayor Polz and Councilmembers don't think that AGCO isn't looking at the City's electric rates verses electric rates elsewhere in the nation. He said if they don't think so, think again. Jasper said AGCO is paying the electric rate that the City is offering them. He said AGCO is looking at other places too, he's sure.

Pell and Mix both said they disagreed with Jasper's statement that AGCO was looking at other places in the nation to operate.

Mix said AGCO is investing \$3 million dollars into a facility in Jackson. She said AGCO is not going anywhere.

Jasper said he's not saying AGCO is moving anywhere else. He explained what he's saying is AGCO is not looking at moving from Jackson, but looking at their electric utility rates and that's an issue for them.

Jasper said \$300,000 spent elsewhere in the City of Jackson would be so much better spent.

Jasper said he would hope the City Council would move forward with some of his considerations, but he certainly wants his alley fixed.

Jasper asked if anyone had any questions.

Mayor Polz told Jasper he and Councilmembers heard what he had to say and appreciated it and learned something.

MENTAL HEALTH “STIGMA FREE” BANNERS

Janet Simon of Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services spoke to Mayor Polz and Councilmembers. Simon noted she talked to the Mayor and Council in November about signing a resolution to make the City of Jackson a “Stigma Free” Zone. She said that was really helpful.

As part of the campaign to bring awareness and eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health, Simon requested permission to hang Stigma Free green street banners on the City’s street light poles along Main Street and Highway 71. She said there are also two big banners that would be hung on flagpoles on Highway 71. Simon said there would be no cost to the City as the cost for the banners is covered by a grant.

Simon said the City’s help would be needed to hang the banners from the flagpoles and put the banners up on the street light poles.

Peterson asked if the Stigma Free banners would replace the City’s summer banners on the light poles.

Skaret asked Simon how long the Stigma Free banners would be up.

Simon said that would be up to the City. She said the banners could be put up at a different time if the City has summer or other type banners they want to have up.

Skaret suggested there could be a scattering of the Stigma Free banners. He said the Stigma Free banners could be put up on every other light pole on Main Street and the Highway or every fourth one or whatever fits their budget.

PETERSON/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the Stigma Free banners to be hung on every third City Street Light Pole along Highway 71 and Second Street (Main Street) in Jackson during the warmer weather months.

Simon thanked Mayor Polz and Councilmembers.

FIRST CONSIDERATION OF ORDINANCE NO. 128 – REZONE CITY-OWNED PARCEL NUMBER 23.013.1320, DESCRIBED AS SECTION 13, TOWNSHIP 102, RANGE 035, 39.31 ACRES, PT S ½ SW ¼ FROM ONE AND TWO FAMILY RESIDENCE DISTRICT (R-2) TO MULTIPLE FAMILY RESIDENCE DISTRICT (R-3)

Skaret explained the property being rezoned is essentially the 39 acres east of the Municipal Liquor Store that the JEDC had swapped with the City which is intended to be used for higher density market-rate multi-family housing development. He said the City is currently working with two potential developers who are giving a housing project a hard look.

Skaret said right now, the property is only zoned basically for single family homes. He explained Ordinance No. 128 would change the zoning to multi-family to accommodate the proposed housing project regardless of whichever developer ends up moving forward with the project.

City Attorney Brad Anderson also noted the final legal description of the property has been assembled and the parcel consists of 36.55 acres. He explained the west boundary of the parcel was corrected and part of the ravine that runs up from the south boundary line was given back to the JEDC for a potential new business that's coming to town.

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve first consideration of Ordinance No. 128.

MIX/FINCK moved and it was unanimously carried to approve First Consideration of Ordinance No. 128 to rezone City owned Parcel Number 23.013.1320 consisting of 36.55 acres from One and Two Family Residence District (R-2) to Multiple Family Residence District (R-3).

WAPA MRES REC DESIGNATED ENTITY CONTRACT

Skaret said this is a new item. He said WAPA (Western Area Power Administration) is using renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) as part of the effort to show that the electric power the City is using and WAPA is selling is "green".

Skaret said the Upper Great Plains Region of WAPA uses the Midwest Renewable Energy Tracking System (M-RETS) to track and distribute environmental attributes associated with the hydropower generated at Pick-Sloan Projects and allocated to Pick-Sloan customers.

Skaret explained M-RETS creates one REC (Renewable Energy Credit) for each megawatt hour of energy generated. He noted each Firm Electric Service customer, which the City of Jackson is one, is eligible to receive an annual share of M-RETS RECs based proportionally on its Pick-Sloan allocation and actual energy generated from Project hydropower facilities during the calendar year. He said the M-RETS program adds to the City's green energy portfolio. Skaret noted businesses and larger industries get rated by national organizations on how "green" their power supply is.

Skaret said each customer's RECs will be deposited into a WAPA M-RETS subaccount. He explained customers will not have access to this subaccount and RECs cannot be retired in this subaccount. Skaret noted a customer must establish an independent REC tracking system account to manage and retire RECs.

As a member of Missouri River Energy Services, Skaret said the City has the option to have MRES manage and administer the City of Jackson's RECs. He said MRES is doing the same for a lot of other communities as well. Skaret said he would recommend the City sign the WAPA contract designating MRES as the City's designated entity to administer the RECs.

TITUS/MIX moved and it was unanimously carried to authorize Mayor Polz and City Administrator Skaret to sign the WAPA MRES Renewal Energy Certificate (REC) Designated Entity Contract.

CITYWIDE CLEAN-UP DAYS

Skaret said the Citywide Clean-up Days was originally scheduled for April 29th and May 6th. He noted the City had also requested a second Clean-up Day to be held in September.

Skaret said Waste Management was not going to honor the second Clean-up Days request for September because they indicated they were too busy and didn't have the staff to do it. He said Waste Management has since reconsidered and are now able to do the second Clean-up on September 16th and September 23rd. Skaret said the estimated cost for the second clean-up remains around \$11,000.

Skaret said an issue arose with the dates for the spring Clean-up. He said the City Council had moved the dates back for the spring Clean-up to May 6th and May 13th to better accommodate the Citywide Garage Sales which are May 4th through the 6th. But, Skaret said Waste Management indicated that Saturday, May 13th or Saturday, May 20th will not work for them due to Clean-ups in other cities. He said Waste Management would have May 27th available but that is Jackson County Central High School graduation weekend and it's not sure if the City wants to mesh Clean-up Day and the high school graduation on the same weekend.

Skaret said the options are to have the spring Clean-up Day on the west side of Jackson on May 6th and then have the east side of Jackson picked up on a date in June, move both pick-up dates back to June, or go back to the original pick-up dates of April 29th and May 6th.

It was the consensus of Councilmembers to have the spring Clean-up dates on April 29th and May 6th.

PETERSON/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to have the 2023 Spring Clean-up Days in Jackson on Saturday, April 29th and Saturday, May 6th and the second round of Clean-up Days on Saturday, September 16th and Saturday, September 23rd with the estimated cost of the second Clean-up Days around \$11,000.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2027 DOCUMENT

Skaret noted Strategic Planning Facilitator Marcy Douglas compiled the final document from the Strategic Planning Sessions that were held on March 15th and 16th. He said the document was included in the City Council's informational packets.

Mayor Polz asked if the Strategic Planning Document could be posted on the City's website and to the media. He noted that was the first City Strategic Planning Session that was held since the 1990's if not longer.

Skaret said the Strategic Planning Document could be posted on the City's website.

Naumann asked if Douglas would return in 90 days to meet with the Council again to see how plans are progressing.

Skaret said Douglas indicated she was going check with her supervisor to see if that was possible.

Mayor Polz noted other Council discussion about possibly putting something on the City Council's agenda to review and make sure progress is being made.

Mix said she would like to have an update once a month.

Skaret said he could put together a list of priorities and a Council checklist and update the status as time moves on.

Skaret noted one of the goals during the Strategic Planning was developing a plan for the swimming pool. He reported the Pool Task Force had their first meeting on Monday, March 20th. Skaret said the Pool Task Force chose their facilitator who will be Shannon Sweeney. He said the Task Force also identified their goals and objectives.

Skaret said the Pool Task Force also started the process of picking their citizen representatives on the Task Force. He said they started with a list of nine and narrowed it down to five. Skaret said the Task Force is going to have Sweeney do a questionnaire of the five remaining citizen candidates to help the Task Force narrow the list down to three at their next meeting.

Pell asked when the Task Force's next meeting will be held.

Skaret said the Task Force is waiting to hear on Sweeney's availability to meet.

Titus, a member of the Pool Task Force, said the Task Force had a very good start at their first meeting with the understanding that everyone needs to work together. He noted the cost of the second pool evaluation is a sticking point for both the City and the School District, but in particular for the School.

ERICKSON PROPERTY PURCHASE AGREEMENT – PARCEL 23.026.1600

Mayor Polz noted Mix had some ideas regarding the Erickson property.

Mix explained she shared pictures of the Erickson property that's located at the corner of Highway 71 and County Road 34.

Skaret noted the pictures were included in the Council's informational packets.

Mix noted one of the City Council's Strategic Goals was the beautification of Jackson. She said the Erickson property would be one of the areas the City could work on to beautify the City and install a nice "Welcome to Jackson" sign. Mix said it will take a lot of work and not be a quick process, but it's property that leads up to the City's trails and could be an area where people can stop when they're using the trails. She said some picnic tables and benches could be located there. Mix said there could also be some parking located there so people could stop and park get on the trails. Mix said she thinks it would all be some great things for Jackson.

Titus asked if it's known how much space is actually available for the City to utilize.

City Attorney Brad Anderson said probably the best and quickest way to find how much property on that lot can be utilized is to contact the Minnesota Department of Transportation who will mark the property showing where the DOT's right-of-way is located.

Titus noted the Erickson property is a nice spot for the City to do something.

Oxborough said he believes there's water and electric service to the property, but no sewer.

Finck asked which City Department would manage the property and make sure it's clean and green and take care of all the things that need to be done. He said the City wants to make sure they have the manpower available to keep it clean and green and keep it looking nice, otherwise it will quickly become an eyesore.

Mix said she has thought about that. She noted the City already has someone on staff that's in charge of the parks but not formerly a Parks Director. Mix said we're leaning towards the point, as a City, where we need someone to manage the parks and also manage activities in town to help recruit. She said the City will eventually need to fill that position. Mix said one of the goals with a garden on the Erickson property, would be to form some garden clubs in Jackson to ask for help to get people out in the community doing things. She suggested maybe asking the School to help as part of their Ag program. Mix said the other goal would be to try to make it as non-hands-on as can be. She said it can be beautiful grass. Mix said it doesn't have to be all flowers that have to be pruned every two days. She said there's ways to get around that. Mix said she looks at it as a way that activity can be brought into Jackson.

Finck asked if there's water available at the Erickson property.

Mix said there's water and electric service available.

Finck noted the area could be irrigated because dead, brown grass would not be attractive.

Peterson said in tying the Erickson property with the trails, maybe the City could get the Trails Committee involved.

Mix said there's a lot of work to do to develop a true plan.

Finck said as long as there's a long-term and short-term plan.

Mix said the City is definitely going to need a long-term vision because this isn't the first area in Jackson that needs beautification. She said that's got to be part of our long-term plan.

Titus noted contacting the Minnesota Department of Transportation to find out what space the City has to work with on the Erickson property before the City starts to make plans.

City Attorney Anderson said the Minnesota DOT can be contacted.

Mix said the City has to have some landscapers look at the property to develop some ideas. She pointed out the purchase of the property is just the first step of taking a bare lot that's not doing anything for Jackson right now. She said let's get it under the City's umbrella and start developing a plan.

Mayor Polz asked for a motion to approve the purchase agreement for the Erickson property.

MIX/PETERSON moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the purchase agreement for the City to purchase the Erickson property-Parcel No. 23.026.1600 for \$18,000.

PROPERTY AND LIABILITY INSURANCE RENEWAL QUOTE

Skaret said the City has their property and liability insurance through the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust. He explained it's essentially an insurance pool made up of approximately 800 cities in the State of Minnesota both large and small. Skaret said there's the liability and property insurance. He said the workman's compensation coverage is a separate policy that will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

Skaret said the City's property and liability insurance premium increased by 17 percent this year going from about \$103,000 to just over \$121,000. He explained the increase is largely due to everyone affected by inflation along with the dollar amount of claims. Skaret said the Insurance Trust also looks at each City's "modification factor". He explained the City of Jackson's "modification factor" is high. Skaret said the City has a higher-than-normal amount of claims as far as dollars on both the City's liability and property claims.

Skaret noted the City of Jackson got a break last year. He said the City has had pretty good renewals for the last two years. Skaret explained the City does get dividends based on the performance of the insurance pool each year. He said it has ranged anywhere from \$5,000 to \$40,000 a year as far as a dividend that the City gets back.

Mayor Polz entertained a motion to approve the City's property and liability insurance quote.

FINCK/TITUS moved and it was unanimously carried to approve the quote of \$121,204 from the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust for the City of Jackson's Property and Liability Insurance.

Other:

Alderman Joe Pell – Park and Message Board Fees

Pell noted there's been discussion a couple of times about the City Council reviewing ordinances, maybe looking at one or two a meeting to keep the ordinances updated.

Pell said he has received a few phone calls regarding Ordinance No. 127 that sets the fees and charges for services provided by the City. He pointed out Ordinance No. 127 has a \$50 fee for the Ashley Park rental whereas the other park rentals in town are \$25. Pell said he thinks the \$50 fee is one that needs to be looked at. He said he thinks the City would get a lot more people to utilize Ashley Park if they didn't have to pay a whole \$50.

Pell said along with that would be the fee to have an announcement posted on the community message board located near Speedway. He said the fee is currently \$20 and he knows there's been some people that would like to post community announcements on that, but they don't want to pay the \$20 to do it. Pell said it's his opinion that the City should review that fee in Ordinance No. 127.

Cat Ordinance

Pell asked if the City has a cat ordinance. He said the reason he asked is because he had someone call him on March 21st and ask him if he's walked in downtown Jackson recently. Pell said the person calling said with the warm weather on March 21st, it really smelled like cat urine. He said that's a problem. Pell said if we want to promote Jackson, we don't want to have a stinky downtown. He said he thinks the City needs to look at an ordinance for not feeding the cats and somehow reduce the population of the cats. Pell said he knows his suggestion is going to start a whirlwind of conversations. He said he thinks the City needs to look at something.

Finck asked Skaret if he could poll other communities on what they have for animal ordinances and see what's out there.

Skaret noted almost every City is having the same problem with cats as Jackson when looking at the City Administrator's list serve. He said the City can have an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of cats, deer and wildlife in general. Skaret said there can also be provisions pertaining to the height of bird feeders. He pointed out how the ordinance will be enforced will also need to be looked at.

Finck said he was just curious what other cities have for animal ordinances, especially domesticated animals.

Skaret said the unique thing about Jackson is when Veterinarian Dr. Fell retired, the City lost their animal control and the City hasn't found a good solution since then. He noted the City doesn't have a place to take the cats once they're captured and that's why the City really doesn't have animal control so to speak in Jackson because there's no place to take animals.

Mix asked if the City has asked the other veterinarian in Jackson if he would take stray cats.

Mayor Polz said the other veterinarian in town is not interested.

Skaret said the City has asked other towns if they would take stray cats and every town's animal shelter is full.

City Attorney Anderson noted the City has one ordinance that limits the number of pets a person can own in Jackson, but not an ordinance regarding the feeding of wild animals.

Skaret said the feeding of wild animals has been brought up for discussion in the past.

Mix said the issue is not about the people who own a couple of cats, but about stray cats.

Peterson said it's the feeding of the stray cats.

Skaret said the problem is the feral cats that roam around downtown.

City Attorney Anderson noted controlling the feral cats could be considered as one of the items towards beautification of the City as outlined at the Strategic Planning Sessions.

Skaret explained in 2020, the Mayor appointed a task force to study the cat problem. He said they met a few times at the Pizza Ranch with Alderman Jeff Gay, law enforcement representatives and the pro-cat and anti-cat people. Skaret said several meetings were held and a spin-off organization was formed from that called JCAPS. He said JCAPS is a 501C-3 non-profit and their mission is to build an animal shelter. Skaret said JCAPS is a volunteer organization. He said JCAPS takes in stray animals and cares for them and tries to adopt them out. Skaret said JCAPS has conducted a variety of fundraisers, especially selling calendars. He said JCAPS' challenge has been being able to locate a facility.

Mayor Polz noted about having an animal ordinance on a future City Council agenda.

Mix said the City Council really needs to talk about it.

Skaret said the stray animal issue is not only a Jackson problem, the lack of an animal shelter is a Countywide problem. Skaret noted there's been talk of trying to get the other entities within Jackson County involved, especially financially.

Mayor Polz asked if Cottonwood, Nobles, Faribault and other counties have an animal shelter.

Skaret said all the counties surrounding Jackson County have an animal shelter.

Luke Ewald noted most counties also have an animal control officer.

Alderwoman Sara Mix

Mix said she wanted to mention the current condition of what's referred to as the Alamo Building at 101 West Ashley Street and the giant hole on the side of the building.

Mix said she's very concerned regarding safety. She said it looks at any point the building could start crumbling. She said she's concerned if the City is not doing anything. Mix said even though the building could potentially have a new owner, it doesn't right now. Mix said every day she drives by the building to see it just getting worse.

Skaret asked City Attorney Brad Anderson on what the City could legally do regarding the Alamo building.

City Attorney Anderson said he understood that there was supposed to be a buyer closing on the property but he hasn't confirmed it or looked into it. He said the City could certainly declare it a hazardous building and start the process to have it torn down. Attorney Anderson said the City would pay for the demolition and put a lean on the property.

Mix said she's just worried that the building is one brick away from falling down so who's going to be liable if the building falls down and the City hasn't done anything.

Skaret said the property owner would be liable.

Mix said she wanted to make sure the issue was brought up and the City Council was talking about it and doing something about it.

City Attorney Anderson said the City has tried to protect themselves regarding liability by basically having the City's Building Inspector declare it a hazardous, dilapidated building so the property owner can't do anything with it other than tear it down and remove it bringing the property back to grade.

Mix asked if the property owner can be required to put some real fencing around it, something to keep people away. She said on the other side of the building, people are parking under the canopy which is fine if they are comfortable with that. Mix said she just doesn't want to see anyone get hurt.

City Attorney Anderson said he could look into the issue. He said he thinks there's an opportunity where it could be treated as an emergency situation and a court order obtained to have the building taken down quicker and short cut the whole system if the City wants to get involved in that.

Mix said she doesn't know what the answer is, it's a dangerous situation.

Pell said more bricks have fallen off the building after they had cleaned up the bricks that previously fell.

Skaret said the building has been losing bricks.

City Attorney Anderson said it's known that there's some kind of hazardous waste inside that has to be removed before demolition, so it's probably not a situation where somebody can simply come in and knock the building into a heap so it can't fall outward or people can go into it. City Attorney Anderson noted there's some complications there but he can look into it if the City Council wants him to.

Mayor Polz said the City had received a quote from Blue Earth Environmental and have an idea of what it would cost the City to remove the building.

Skaret said the quote last summer was \$30,000.

Peterson suggested reaching out to the current property owner and see what the status is of the sale of the property.

Finck also asked to see if the sale of the property is taking place.

Mayor Polz said his concern is that getting the City involved in tearing the building down could complicate the sale closing.

Mix said she doesn't want to complicate the sale closing for the potential new owner but she also wants the new owner to understand that it's not an option to leave the building like it is.

Peterson said he believes the new owner wants to remove the building.

Mix noted that every day the building is getting worse. She said she just wanted to make sure the City Council talked about it.

Need for an Activities Director

Mix said there are new amenities coming to town and people trying to really put things together for the town and we can't rely all on just the City and current City employees to manage those activities all day, every day. She said the City really needs to start looking at having an Activities Director to be a representative of the City at events, to make sure that everything is good, there are no worries and someone's there monitoring activities and promoting and putting on events. Mix said she thinks that's something the City Council needs to start really looking at.

Finck asked Skaret to schedule a Personnel Committee meeting sometime in April to discuss Mix's suggestions to discuss adding City staff.

Alderman Nathan Peterson

Alderman Nathan Peterson just wanted to remind everyone that on Friday, March 31st is the Jackson Fireman's Dance from 7 p.m. to 12 midnight at the National Guard Armory. He said tickets will be available at the door and the support is appreciated.

Alderman Chris Naumann

Alderman Naumann said a Library Board meeting was held. He said it appears the issues with the heating in the library have been resolved.

Skaret said there's a temporary fix for the boilers right now. He said there probably will be a need to install a new boiler or boilers at the library. Skaret said a quote could be available at the next City Council meeting and it may be a large number.

Naumann also noted there's some repair work that needs to be done to some of the windows in the library because water is seeping in.

Skaret said the windows have been an ongoing problem since the library was renovated.

Alderman Mark Titus

Alderman Titus said he shares the same concern Mix has regarding the Alamo building. He also noted some of the blighted, dilapidated residential structures within a few blocks of City Hall. He said some of those structures haven't been occupied for years and look terrible. Titus said he would encourage the City Council taking a tour this spring to take a look at things, make some notes, and try to make some hard decisions. He said he would like to see a more aggressive approach regarding blighted properties.

City Attorney Brad Anderson

City Attorney Anderson said work is underway by the administration group regarding addressing blighted properties and making sure the City has all the tools in their toolbox to deal with issues and maybe make some suggestions where ordinances can be changed and get some ideas from the Sheriff's Department because they are a big part of the effort.

City Administrator Matt Skaret

Skaret said he just wanted to echo what has already been said about the nuisances in town and enforcement of ordinances. He noted the City's new GoGov app has an extra feature available, for an additional charge to the City, where residents can report complaints and nuisances directly to City Hall. Skaret said then the City can develop a standard uniformed process for handling complaints and have a little bit more organization in processing those complaints. He said the City of Blue Earth is currently using the feature on their GoGov app which allows residents to report nuisances and they have been very happy with it. Skaret said he is working on getting a demonstration scheduled for City Hall staff.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Mayor Polz entertained a motion to adjourn.

PETERSON/NAUMANN moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Jackson City Council meeting at 7:49 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Council Secretary

Marcus Polz, Mayor

