

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

A lot at 1710 Broadway has been vacant for awhile, since the fire department burned down the house there in a practice session about two years ago.

The city acquired the lot, after paying the back taxes, and had it cleared and leveled. Now, it will go up for sale by bid.

The Imperial city council voted Monday to sell the lot. Sealed bids will be accepted in the coming weeks and opened at the council's Nov. 23 meeting.

Council members learned at their last meeting there might be some interest from a developer in building a duplex or fourplex at the site. However, with some type of incentive, such as the city donating the lot to the developer, they were told it's difficult for a developer to make such a project cash-flow.

Building Inspector Nick Schultz, who was at the meeting, said, when asked his thoughts, that it costs just as much to build a duplex here as in Denver, but this area won't get the rental fee to make it cash-flow like Denver can.

Without some type of incentive, such as donation of the lot, market rate (non-subsidized) rental housing is difficult to build.

Community Development Director Leslie Carlholm said housing studies here indicate a need for market rate rental housing.

Prior to their vote, the council reviewed a cost benefit analysis on the property prepared by Carl-holm, which compared the cost benefits of a duplex at the site or a shop building. The benefit weighed largely in favor of the duplex, when considering taxes paid, local spending by the renters and potential children in school.

However, there is no firm commitment from the developer for the duplex construction there, according to the discussion.

Council President Doug Gaswick asked what would it take to get something built there.

"I haven't pursued it with the individual who approached the city, but if there is negativity in the community with donation of the lot, they will probably back away," Carlholm said.

She said to get market rate housing which is "badly needed," the value of the donated lot is minimal compared to the benefit realized by the community as a whole.

In the end, the council decided to put it up for bid and see what interest comes of that.

One bid was received when the lot was put up for sale previously, but was rejected, because it was less than **what the city had invested in it.**

Other council business

- An update on roof repair over the Imperial Manor facility from Administrator Kathy Anderson noted another insurance adjuster was expected here this week to look at that roof again, possibly to see if damage was from wind. A previous claim on the roof due to hail damage was rejected by Traveler's Insurance. In other action, the council approved use of a credit card for purchases for the senior services facilities.

- There have been some requests for using debit/credit cards for payment of city utility bills, said City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland. However, accepting such cards comes with fees to the city each time one of those cards is used. There would also be some upfront costs to the city for software and equipment to implement the system. Mayor Annie Longan questioned whether the city should be paying those fees if the service was offered, although the city could charge a "convenience fee" to cover their costs, Leyland said. Customers currently have an option to pay online but it costs the customer a 4% fee, or they can have the funds automatically withdrawn each month from their accounts, which also has a fee to the customer. Payment can also be made by cash or check, which most use. After a lengthy discussion, no action was taken but the council will discuss it again in November.

- Two replats were approved in the Wesley and Adams Subdivisions. The Planning Commission had previously approved the requests at an earlier meeting.

- Four high school students were named to boards in the city as student representatives, after appointments from Mayor Longan. They include Jake Burke, city council; Shanna Carter, park board; Jilanne German, theatre board; and BreAnna Brown, library board.

- The council approved purchase of a Bobcat for the public works department. Supt. Pat Davison said one bid was received from Murphy Equipment & Tractor in North Platte for \$37,121.60. It will come with a bucket on front, a mower attachment and forklift. Funds were budgeted this year for the purchase.