By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

A resolution unanimously approved Monday night by the Imperial city council will provide up to \$165,740 in loan funds from city sales tax dollars to help get a rental housing project off the ground.

Representatives of Imper-ial Prime, Inc., formed from a Chamber of Commerce housing committee, were at the council meeting to discuss the project.

Committee member Steve Smith said they are looking to purchase a four-plex apartment complex in a nearby community and then move it to Imperial.

The structure, built in 2008, is a two-story apartment building that is for sale "at a very attractive price," Smith said.

The complex was foreclosed upon by a McCook bank.

The four 900-square-foot units each have two bedrooms and one bath.

The Prime, Inc., committee has met with potential building movers, and has also had the apartment complex inspected to assure it meets codes, Smith said.

"We think it's a viable deal," he said.

Smith explained, if the purchase goes through, the building would be moved to Imperial, placed on a lot along Grant St., between 12th and 13th Sts. (east of EMS building) and "make it available to businesses that have a need for its employees."

Two sources of funding are proposed, Smith said—the LB840 loan funds and employer donations.

In exchange for the "donation," the business would be able to reserve an apartment unit at below market rate for their employees, he said.

If the business didn't need the apartment right away, Smith said Prime, Inc., would rent it out at market rate to the public. Rental rates to the public would probably be around \$600 per month, he said.

Depending on the interest from the business community, Smith said they possibly would build on two to four additional garden-level units.

The \$165,740 maximum request in loan funds would be utilized for the four-unit complex and possible additional apartments, and represents half of the estimated \$331,480 cost for land acquisition, building purchase/renovations, acquisition of furniture/fixtures and project management.

The minimum LB840 loan amount requested by Prime, Inc., is \$103,750 only for the relocation of the four-unit apartment complex to Imperial and related costs.

"That's what we're looking for in this project. It will help with the housing in the community and we think we have something that will be attractive," Smith concluded.

According to the resolution, the funds will be loaned at 0.23 percent interest, with interest rate reviews every three years. The loan would be repaid over 15 years.

Smith said the Chamber's housing committee has been meeting about once weekly for more than a year to address housing solutions for local employers for their potential employees.

Other housing efforts the committee has considered in the past included building new homes, renovating older homes and building apartment units.

Another Prime, Inc., committee member at the meeting was Jane Moreland.

Tap waiver fee program

In a related issue, the council approved a revised program that waives water and sewer tap fees and some electrical service expenses for new construction.

The council and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) have been going back and forth on details of the pilot program for several months.

The CAC first recommended the funds only go to rental properties, while some on the council felt it should be for all new construction projects.

In the final form, the CAC recommended committing \$30,000 for the program's first year from economic development sales tax funds. That is down from \$50,000 in the original proposal. Eligible projects for the waivers will include:

- 1) Water and sewer tap fees, electrical service expenses required by new business construction.
- 2) Water and sewer tap fees, electrical service expenses required for expansion construction by an existing business.
- 3) Water and sewer tap fees, electrical service expenses required for any new housing development.

Projects must be a minimum of \$60,000 in taxable valuation and all eligible projects must be in the city limits.

Reimbursement will be up to \$5,000 per project for the developer's actual cost.

Projects that are currently under construction and have the water and sewer taps already in place will not be eligible to apply for the waivers.

Other council business

- Although there have been some inquiries, no applications had been received early this week for the community development director position to replace Leslie Carlholm. The salary range had not been included on the city's advertisements. City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said that may be why there are no applications. The council directed Leyland to add a salary range of "\$40,000 to \$65,000 depending on experience" to their advertisements. The Citizens Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to the council for use of sales tax funds on the economic development side, had approved designating \$20,000 from sales tax funds to assist with wages for the position and Imperial Public Power District committed to an additional \$10,000 donation to the economic development program.
- A wage ordinance was approved to add three city employee increases that were inadvertently left off the wage ordinance approved last month for 2012-13. Added were a \$1,000 increase for Nick Schultz, building inspector/zoning officer (\$13,000 annual to \$14,000); and a 45-cent per hour raise for Library Director Beth Falla. One other library employee also received a 31-cent per hour increase.
- In the senior services report, council members and the mayor okayed the purchase of the American Health Tech computer hardware/software system for the facility's efforts toward paperless record-keeping by the end of 2013. They had considered another system, but Palmer said she had concerns with continual added costs beyond the purchase price. In another area, Palmer said Hallie Deaver was named the interim director of the daycare center, replacing Holly Lempke, who resigned. Two other daycare employees also resigned last week, but

administrator Sandra Palmer said two people have since been hired.