By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

The Imperial Volunteer Fire Department was given the go-ahead to proceed with plans for a new fire hall on Broadway between 7th and 8th Sts., on the vacant city-owned lot.

Fire Chief Nick Schultz visited with the council on the future structure at the council's Oct. 15 meeting.

At a meeting earlier this month, Schultz said the fire barn now has no room for additional trucks if ever more are added. The bays are getting narrower as trucks get bigger, he said.

Schultz said the committee's estimates of a new fire hall building were around $750,000. A bond issue vote will be needed to help fund the effort, which could come in the 2014 Primary or General Election.

There had been discussion at a previous council meeting to include the police department in the new structure, but there was some concern it would likely result in less space for the police while adding to the cost of the new building. The police are now housed in office space at 637 Broadway, just north of the current fire hall.

At last week's meeting, Police Chief Rob Browning said they are satisfied with their current facilities which involve about 2,000 square feet with additional basement storage.

There had been some discussion by the council and mayor that with potential roof problems over the police office and current fire hall, it may be worthy of including an area for police within the future fire hall structure, and demolish the current fire barn and police offices.

Estimates of adding space for the police would put the total price tag at more than $1 million, Schultz noted.

Repairs had been made to the roof recently, and there were no leaks after Imperial's snow the first weekend in October. Repairs to the north and south walls on top of the building are also expected to eliminate moisture problems.

Another reason some on the council and the mayor suggested including the police in the new building was their concern with taking up downtown retail space for government operations. However, Mayor Dwight Coleman said last week his concerns came with the possibility of having to replace the entire roof over the current facilities estimated to cost about $50,000, as well as continued high utility costs there.

Schultz felt with the recent repairs, the current roof has five to 10 years of life in it. Also, the heat wouldn't be needed in the barn if the trucks are in a new location, he said.

"I still think we need some downtown business property to be developed," said council member John Arterburn.

Public Works Supt. Pat Davison said he could use some of the bays for storage, and there was discussion earlier the police could keep the cars on duty in there during winter instead of running it all the time.

Davison said since he's worked for the city, the department has used a hangar at the airport for storage.

The council indicated they may look at a different location for the police department in the future.

Other council business

- Annexation of Steve and Deborah Schilke's property outside the northwest boundaries of Imperial was approved unanimously. The area to be annexed will include the winery building, parking areas and commercial loading/unloading zones, all of which was estimated to be under an acre. Deborah Schilke attended the meeting and indicated it was not their intent when requesting annexation to include the farm ground, currently zoned agricultural. The annexation agreement outlines that the annexation area be from half an acre minimum up to 15 acres, leaving how much beyond the building, parking and loading area the Schilkes want to include. Construction has started on the winery building along Grant Street, west of Titan Machinery.

- Interest has grown in the city's job opening for community development director replacing Leslie Carlholm. As of this week, 11 applications have been received. City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland told the council and mayor last week interest grew after the wage range of $40,000 to $65,000 (depending on experience) was included on the advertising. She hopes to start interviews this week. In another employee area, the public works department is looking for a new employee, after the resignation of Tyler Vlasin, reported Supt. Pat Davison.
- An insurance claim will be submitted for damage done to the headstone and vases on the Creveling family plot in the southwest section of Mt. Hope Cemetery. Art and Liz Creveling attended the meeting with some photos of the damage, which include a chip at the top of the stone and damage to marble vases they said were found knocked over. There were no witnesses to the damage estimated at about $2,000.
- Possibilities of a survey will be looked into for getting an official street platted in the 15th and Sioux Sts., area in northwest Imperial. Council member Arterburn said property adjacent to his has been sold and access to his home will be limited. He said a street never had been platted when the home was built and given the address 1540 Sioux St. He noted some GPS systems do not register his address when delivering packages. Davison will talk with the city's engineer, Miller & Associates, about a possible survey.