Donation of lots for 10 rental units hoped to spur development

By Jan Schultz
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Things may be looking up for the rental housing shortage in Imperial.

Action by the Imperial city council Monday that finalized an agreement with a California-based firm should help along plans for the construction of 10 rental housing units in the city-owned Cornerstone Commercial Park in southeast Imperial.

Monday also marked the first meeting for two new council members, Dan Thompson and J.D. Reeder, who were elected in November. They replace Doug Gaswick and Sue Moore.

The council vote this week sells for $1 seven lots on the north side of 2nd Street in Cor nerstone to Dana Point Development Corporation, a firm involved in housing development in Nebraska for 13 years.

The purchase agreement approved Monday underwent some fine-tuning since the Nov. 19 meeting when the council wanted some assurances the project would proceed.

The agreement states that if construction does not begin by May 1, 2014, ownership of the property returns to the city.

The council also wanted to make clear its responsibilities for infrastructure improvements such as streets and utility mains.

According to the document, the city will provide gravel streets initially on 2nd Street which borders Lots 12-18 intended for the project. Mains for water, electric and sewer service to the property will also be laid.

At this time, a graveled street in front of the lots is planned. It adds that no assessments are to be made to Dana Point for curb and gutter or street paving, if the city chooses to proceed with those improvements on its own. However, if the developer petitions the city to do so, the owners could be assessed for those costs.

Dana Point will be responsible for the utility connection costs the city normally assesses to new construction projects.

However, the company would be eligible to apply for the city's tap waiver fee program if there are still funds available, according to Monday's discussion.

The agreement also specifies that other financing from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and Nebraska Investment Finance Authority be received first by Dana Point, or the agreement with the city on these lots is null and void.

If all of the company's financing is realized, construction could begin in the spring.

There was no public input on the project Monday. City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said Matt Thomas of Dana Point had reviewed the agreement and had no problems.

In related action Monday, a General Redevelopment Plan for the entire Cornerstone property was reviewed.

The plan would set into motion tax increment financing (TIF) for the area. TIF is a public financing method that is used for subsidizing redevelopment, infrastructure and other community-improvement pro-jects.

What happens is that any additional tax dollars generated by the improvement, such as the housing project, can be “captured” and kept in a separate fund to help pay for such improvements as infrastructure rather than go to the taxing entities.

Leyland said that’s the city’s intent—to use the TIF funds for infrastructure development there.

The council chose to do a more further review of the redevelopment plan and will act on it in January.

At that time, it’s also expected the council will have an engineer’s design before them in January on the development of improvements in Cornerstone such as streets, mains and curb/gutter that will likely be divided into sections for bidding.

By being in sections, the council will be able to decide what they want to proceed with, if anything, when bids come in, Leyland said.

Other council business

- Newly-elected council members Thompson and Reeder took their oaths of office read by City Attorney Josh Wendell. The group elected Chad Yaw to serve as council president.
- The December council meeting also serves as a time for the mayor to appoint members to boards and commissions that expire this month. New members and reappointments include Cindy Roesener and Don Newman, library board; Alex McNair and Scott Way, park/tree commission; Monna Milner and Mary Lou Hegwood, cemetery board; Doug Carman, Stewart Weiss and Randy Roesener, planning commission; Launy Ringleman, variance board; Lori Beard, housing authority; Doug Gaswick and Russ Pankonin, community redevelopment authority; Johna Jablonski, citizens advisory committee and loan review committee. Mayor Dwight Coleman said he had several other appointments to make, and will also assign council liaisons to each committee and board.
- At the request of City Clerk/Administrator Leyland, city employees will be given Dec. 24 as an additional paid holiday this year. The public works department will have a person on call as they usually do on holidays, and police will be on duty. Offices will be closed.
- After reconsideration using police input, the Planning Commission forwarded a new recommendation on traffic speed and a stop sign on streets within Capitol Mobile Home Park. The crosswalk at East 10th and Shorthorn Sts. has been placed, but the speed of 25 mph on those streets will be left as it was, but signs will be posted. No stop sign will be placed on East 10th, as originally recommended. The council also proceeded with adding the additional handicapped parking space west of the crosswalks on East 9th by the school, and gave it final approval.
- Earlier this year, the city approved purchase of a tile in The Spirit of Nebraska Pathway near the state capitol in Lincoln. From a group of four, council members chose the following motto to be placed on their tile—“Imperial Nebraska, Making the Good Life Even Better.”

- Imperial Volunteer Fire Department officers for 2013 were approved as presented. Line officers include Nick Schultz, chief; Doug Mitchell, first asst. chief; Greg Koellner, second asst. chief; Daryl Sharp, first lieutenant; Brad Wheeler, second lieutenant. Business officers are Dirk Hill, president; Craig Loeffler, vice president; Josh Burke, secretary; Todd Burpo, treasurer; Josh Moreno, sergeant at arms.