

Feedback received in response to daily whistles

Written by Chris Lee

The idea of letting the public decide whether or not to shut off the daily whistles around town was generated at the Jan. 19 city council meeting.

Feedback from the community concerning the council's Jan. 5 decision to shut off the daily whistles on the siren located downtown was addressed.

Mayor David Nygaard reiterated only the 7 a.m., noon and 6 p.m. whistles were eliminated on the downtown tower. All other sirens in town sound at those times. The fire and tornado siren will still sound on the downtown tower as well as the other towers. This was evident as the fire whistle sounded Friday, Jan. 22 and could be heard coming from the downtown siren.

The idea of adding the issue to the ballot was discussed. Council members agreed to put a couple of different options on the ballot.

Feedback received by each council member differed. Some said feedback was positive while others received negative feedback. An anonymous letter was also received which was in strong favor of the whistles. The author was severely dissatisfied with the council's Jan. 5 decision and wanted to see the daily option be turned back on.

Council members questioned the siren located on the golf course. With the elimination of the downtown daily whistles, it was stated the north part of town is quiet when they sound. City Supt. Mark Brown said there were some issues with the antenna located at the communications center.

A controller and parts for an additional siren were priced and presented to council members. Brown said the controller would be around \$1,980 and a contractor would be \$150. Brown also mentioned the new controller wouldn't be equipped with a timer so the option of having the siren sound three times a day wouldn't be available.

Council members discussed where they thought an additional siren would be needed. Depending on the wind, there is a dead spot in the southwest part of town. It was also mentioned the sirens couldn't be heard within the hospital.

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Brown also mentioned a sound study was conducted a while back and a map was created as a result showing the areas where a whistle would be needed.

Prices set for city owned lots

Prices for 13 city-owned lots located in the southwest part of town were set. It was stated the units must be purchased in increments of 25 feet with a minimum of 75 feet. Prices were set at \$90 per frontage foot for center lots and \$95 per frontage foot on corner lots.

It was also suggested a sign be placed in the area to advertise the lots.

A new computer was approved for City Supt. Brown. His old computer will be used exclusively for the swimming pool and fuel farm at the airport. He said it wouldn't be connected to the internet so private information from the fuel farm would be protected.

The initial step in the process of allowing the city to deal with dangerous buildings was taken when the council agreed to move forward by obtaining copies of the uniform code for the abatement of dangerous buildings.

Council members entered into a 30-minute executive session for a conference with the city attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice on specific legal questions.

Reports of city officials

Police Chief Phil Biersdorfer suggested the board approve his request to send Damon Ellis to a fire/arson investigation academy. He said Ellis is trained in fire safety and the academy would be a good experience and would benefit Holyoke P.D.

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Code enforcement officer Dawn Worley reported 1,020 calls for service during 2009. 26 new cases were opened and nine citations were written. Council members questioned the low number of citations and Worley said most of the situations became compliant without citations being written.

Council members voted to move Worley out of the law enforcement position and under the supervision of the City Supt. for a period of six months. After the six months, the council will re-evaluate the position.

Council members discussed the option of placing issues with the bike path on the ballot. Councilman Ray Bailey said it would help with grant writing to show support from members of the community.

Other business

In other business Jan. 19, council members:

—accepted annual report from the Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department.

—approved the purchase of a hot stick wet/dry tester for city crews to use. The tester is used for electricity testing.