Holyoke City Council is planning to search for a new code enforcement officer to fill the vacancy left after Dawn Worley announced her resignation in July to accept another job. There just hasn't been a set time in which they plan to do so.

Councilman Scott Murray thought the council was planning to wait until next year as code enforcement duties tend to slow down during the winter months.

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom said one item that may come up in addition to junk violations is making sure fire hydrants are clear of snow.

That comment prompted Murray to say some of the hydrants need to be painted. Mayor Orville Tonsing suggested that would be a good job for the Boy Scouts to take on. "It is something to think about," Tonsing said.

Councilman David Churchwell said he doesn't see a reason to hire someone now if there won't be much for them to do.

Councilman Brian Akey said if they start searching now, realistically they probably won't hire anyone until December and that person wouldn't begin until January or February. If the council waits to begin searching, it could be when things pick back up that the newly hired person would be thrown into the situation.

The city is also looking into dog pound ideas and is waiting to receive planning ideas. "If we do get something on the dog pound, we're going to have to make a decision sooner than later," Akey said.

The new code enforcer would be working with stray dogs and utilize the new facility.

“We might as well get going now,” Akey said in regard to hiring a new enforcement officer.

Councilman Kevin Scott questioned snow removal enforcement, and Akey said the previous officer issued notices regarding snow removal.

The meeting adjourned with no real decision being made. The subject will be placed on the Oct. 2 agenda.

CSU students to return to Mini Park

Linda Langelo attended last week’s meeting to say she has been in contact with CSU, who is willing to send three or four more students to Holyoke to look into safety issues at Lions Club Mini Park.

In February, CSU engineering students came to Holyoke to look into ways to help save the park’s brick wall that had severe cracking. Following their visit, Holyoke City Council decided to hire Hayward Baker Geotechnical Construction, who came and injected a substance under the concrete to help lift sagging parts and push the bottom of the wall up to close the cracking that had occurred.

This second visit will look into possible solutions for the awning/shelter aspect of the park.

The idea is to see what other ideas people have to see what can be done to make the park pop a little more to attract use for it.

Council members voted to pay mileage for the students who plan to visit the park Saturday, Oct.

20.

Reports of city officials

Council members heard reports from Superintendent Mark Brown and Police Chief Bergstrom at last week's meeting.

Brown noted city crews dealt with a water main break in the 200 block of S. Sherman Ave. Unfortunately, where the water appeared wasn't necessarily where the main was broken, and Brown said they ended up tearing up 50 feet of the street to find the break.

He also said they took advantage of the extremely dry conditions and managed to clear the creek bottom of overgrown debris near the sewer lagoons. He said it had been nearly 30 years since they had been able to get to the area and they were able to drive a pickup with a chipper down the center to help clean the area out this year.

Murray questioned Brown about the number of squirrels that have caused power outages around the city. In his report during each meeting, Brown regularly mentions power outages being caused by squirrels.

Murray wondered if there are any preventative measures that can be used on transformers to lower the number of outages caused by squirrels. Brown said there are and some of the solutions work while others may not. Murray said he would like to know how many transformers the city has and if it would be feasible to invest in preventative measures.

Murray also was curious to see how much money the city has spent on repairs due to squirrel-caused outages as well as overtime paid to city employees who respond to the calls when they are not at work.

Brown said anywhere from 50-75 percent of the calls come in during normal working hours. And for some reason, it is usually during the morning hours.

With regard to the street department. Murray said he received a call from some homeowners regarding unpaved streets. The blocks have gutters in place on both sides but all of the lots haven't been tapped yet. Brown said in the past, the council wouldn't pave a street until all the lots sold by the city were tapped.

Bergstrom said his department investigated multiple reports of slashed tires between the 200-700 blocks of S. Baxter Ave. a few weeks ago. He noted there were no leads as to who may have committed the crimes but they are continuing to look into the situation.

Other business

In other business Sept. 18, council members:

—voted 5-1 to amend the force and firearms policy in order to add electronic restraint devices to tools for the police department to use. Murray said he wasn't a full believer in tasers not causing harm to individuals and cast the lone dissenting vote. Steve Moore was absent from last week's meeting

—accepted the property/casualty renewal premium quote from CIRSA for 2013 in the amount of $48,655 after the equity credit has been applied and with a $2,500 deductible per incident.

—accepted the workers compensation renewal premium quote from CIRSA for 2013 at $54,109.

—accepted a bid from Lance Murray Construction to replace the walk-in door on the north side of the fire shed for a total of $535.50.

—approved a special event permit for Phillips County Pheasants Forever Nov. 10.

—approved travel request for officer Larry Drake to attend Advanced Criminal Patrol Tactics training in Denver Oct. 18.

—held a short work session following the meeting for junk issues.

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