

Electric rates to increase; snow removal addressed by City Council

Written by Chris Lee

Electric rates, snow removal and tree assessment were main topics discussed at the Nov. 3 Holyoke City Council meeting.

Electric rates to increase

Beginning Dec. 18, electric rates will increase. The purpose for the change is to permit the City of Holyoke to offset rate increases under which the city purchases its wholesale energy and power requirements.

The adjustment is limited to an adjustment in rates which will allow the city to keep pace with the increased costs of wholesale power and energy which it purchases for distribution to its retail customers. The retail rate increase requested is the minimum necessary to preserve the financial integrity of the city's electrical system.

The new rates will result in an approximate increase of nine percent for residential and commercial customers.

Customers wanting more information may contact the City Clerk's office at 854-2266.

Snow removal issues

An item not even on Tuesday's meeting agenda was brought up during committee reports. Mayor David Nygaard said it was brought to his attention residents were not pleased with how the snow removal was handled with the last snow Thursday, Oct. 29—particularly downtown near the businesses.

The process was delayed that Friday morning because city crews had to clear the runway at the airport due to an expected plane coming in, City Supt. Mark Brown said. There was also a funeral in town and the streets needed to be cleared. Those two places were cleared before downtown work began.

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“It wasn’t an ideal situation for us and I apologize to the business owners,” Brown said.

Board members questioned Brown about early morning snow removal near downtown businesses. Brown said it would be nice to see store owners and employees have the sidewalks cleared by 6 a.m. He said they usually get crews started clearing snow around 5:30-6 a.m. depending on the storm and amount of snow.

He said in the past, the sidewalks get cleared after city crews have already cleared the streets. The snow from the sidewalks is pushed back into the street in some places, which hampers parking.

Another issue were the piles of snow near the intersections along Denver Street. Brown said it would help if snow could be pushed toward the alleys instead of intersections to help decrease visibility issues.

Council member Ray Bailey suggested presenting business owners with a letter explaining the requests.

Tree assessment reviewed

Linda Langelo, with CSU Cooperative Extension, updated the board on the condition of some trees around Holyoke. She conducted a tree assessment in town, documenting trees and taking photos. She also mentioned the community garden raised about 923 pounds of food this year compared to 1,080 pounds last year.

Langelo said almost half of what they harvested this summer went to the Methodist Food Bank.

The east side of town is a bigger problem area compared to the west, according to Langelo when it comes to the trees. She said the west side has a younger tree population.

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Board members officially recognized Langelo as the tree assessment consultant and approved a \$1,000 a year stipend.

Jim Blake and Brian Akey presented board members with information on the golf course. The Holyoke Golf Course requested a reimbursement and board members wanted to receive clarification on where they stand.

Blake said he is worried about where the golf course will stand at the end of the year. He also mentioned they have seen a drop in memberships.

Reports of city officials

City Supt. Brown said the fuel farm at the airport is now up and running. With the recent snowfall, he said crews were busy working on some power outages as a result of tree limbs falling on power lines.

In other business Nov. 3, council members:

—accepted insurance quote for 2010 boiler and machinery coverage.

—approved insurance quote for volunteer accident medical plan.

—decided to donate \$100 to Healing Tree, Addition Treatment Solutions, Inc. per their request.