Discussions concerning the existing stray cat problem dominated much of the Feb. 5 Holyoke City Council meeting.

A cat ordinance was discussed at length at the Jan. 15 meeting as well, but a variety of problems stand in the way of being able to actually put an ordinance into effect.

During the visitor comment section of the night, Dr. Darrell Tomky of Holyoke Veterinary Service presented the council with some concerns about the possible ordinance. He noted that should the council decide to put some sort of ordinance into action that involved catching cats, they would be responsible for housing the cats for at least five days before adopting them out or euthanizing them, as required by the Colorado Animal Care Act.

Tina McNulty voiced her displeasure with the idea of euthanizing cats. She suggested a catch-and-release method that she believed to be successful in other small communities.

Tom Hethcote also opposed any ordinance for cats, noting that he doesn't see any reason to add another law specifically for cats. He took issue with a law being made to deal with what he considered to be just a few cases a year. He proposed the city help handle it on a case-by-case basis, suggesting the city cleanup days would be a fitting time to deal with the issue.

He also questioned why cats were more of a risk than the opossums he has seen around town. Hethcote raised questions regarding the cost of an ordinance. He asked who would pay for the fees of neutering the cats and whether an animal control position would need to be funded.

Stalled by numerous obstacles including the costs associated with upholding the required housing laws, the ordinance was tabled. Plans to continue preliminary discussions on the topic were made for the next meeting, as much research and planning was still left to handle before any action could be taken.

Still working out kinks to animal shelter plans

Although the first plan submitted to the state for an animal shelter was denied, the city council remains optimistic, noting that progress may be slow, but they are much closer than they were a year ago.

A problem concerning the walkway of the plan was the reason it was denied. Under the original plans, dogs could get nose-to-nose with each other when one was let out. An alteration to the confinement and the gates of the pens were planned to ensure no dogs can make contact with each other.

At this point, no plans to hold cats have been added to the planning of the shelter.

More updates ahead for baseball field

An application from the City of Holyoke for a local parks and outdoor recreation grant from the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Trust Fund has been temporarily stalled, as the exact amount of the request is still uncertain.

The city is looking to make various upgrades to the restrooms, dugouts, playground and bleachers of the Holyoke Ball park with the grant money. Restrooms and dugouts will be made handicap accessible while a breezeway will be constructed in a manner that prevents children from being able to sprint into the parking lot from the playground.

The city recently completed a project that updated the bleachers at the field, but with the new money, steel awnings for shade and to protect spectators from stray foul balls will be added.

In total, the project is expected to cost roughly $187,000. The city can use up to $65,000 from the Conservation Trust Fund, while the rest will hopefully be covered through the GOCO grant and community donations.

It will not be known until mid-summer if the application is accepted or not. If it is accepted, work will begin during the 2013-14 school year.

Reports from city officials

City Superintendent Mark Brown noted that underground power lines will be put into Cobblestone Inn and Suites this week.

Brown also informed the council that City Park had recently been vandalized. A portion of the plastic tubing on the playground equipment was broken and will need to be replaced as it poses a safety hazard.

Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that from Jan.10-30, there were 86 calls for service, one arrest, one citation and 16 warnings given.

Other business

In other business Feb. 5, the city council:

-—agreed to set the price of city owned lots at $90 per frontage foot for center lots and $95 per frontage foot for corner lots with a minimum lot size of 75 feet, and that it be mandatory to sell the lots in a manner so the entire block can be sold. The prices will be reviewed the first of each year and the city furnishes curb, gutter and oil.

-—approved the 2012 year-end transfers.

-—approved the travel request for Karla Pargas to attend NECO Pool Managers meeting in Yuma Feb. 6.

—approved training travel request for Sgt. Damon Ellis and Officer Dwight Thompson to attend a warrant execution class in Sterling March 25-26.

—agreed on additional CIRSA Property/Casualty Pool 2013 contribution from preliminary quotation in the amount of $5,859.

—agreed that a background check and a full evaluation will be performed for possible candidates for the code enforcement position.

—approved Nici Bishop to act as a liaison between the city and the chamber for the 125th anniversary activities.

Holyoke Enterprise February 14, 2013