

Soccer considered for role in GOCO grant

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

Prior to the Tuesday, June 18 Holyoke City Council meeting, members of the community were invited to the council chambers for their input regarding the possibility of bringing a soccer field to Holyoke.

Discussions about creating a soccer field came about after the City of Holyoke was denied a Great Outdoors Colorado grant that would have been used to make improvements to the town baseball facility.

In order for the city to improve its chances of being selected for a GOCO grant in August when the next grant cycle begins, they must first come up with ways in which to encourage more physical activity.

Four citizens showed up for the town meeting, most of which were in support of the recreation program, but some concerns were voiced.

Tom Bennett, who stated that he supports the rec program in general and believes soccer can be a great outlet for kids, voiced his concern that utilizing the smaller baseball field as a soccer field would be taking away from the intended purpose of the field, which is for baseball and softball.

Voicing support for soccer, José León said he was surprised to find out that several Holyoke and Haxtun kids were traveling to Sterling to play soccer. Keeping players and teams in Holyoke and having other towns and teams travel here would be beneficial to the city.

He noted that in the past 15 years, the sport has definitely gained popularity in the state, in part due to Colorado forming a professional soccer club, the Colorado Rapids, in 1996.

It has become common to see groups of kids around Holyoke playing soccer at any open space they can find. With the World Cup, which is only played every four years, set for 2014, León said the popularity of the sport is likely to rise even more.

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Young soccer players have to join leagues in either Sterling or Julesburg to compete, forcing parents to make multiple trips a week for practices and games.

Yesenia Bencomo commented that holding games locally would be a great way to showcase Holyoke.

Sharon Jones mentioned that close to 100 Holyoke kids in preschool through fourth grade were involved in soccer leagues outside of Holyoke.

Jones has actually been in touch with Dennis Hill who heads the Julesburg recreation program about possibly making Holyoke a site for some of the league's games if Holyoke were to secure a site for soccer fields.

A few towns that border the Colorado state line, such as Oshkosh, Neb., Chappell, Neb., and Big Springs, Neb., all play in the Julesburg soccer league. Hosting teams from these towns would allow Holyoke residents to stay in town and avoid spending money in other towns while bringing in out-of-town money.

In order to host games for the Julesburg league, three fields would have to be constructed, according to Jones.

A 40x20-yard field would be used for kids in preschool and kindergarten, a 60x40-yard field for first- and second-graders and an 80x40-yard field for third-eighth-grade students.

Locations for soccer fields were discussed, including the outfield of the smaller baseball field and the open areas that surround the baseball fields.

A problem with using the baseball field as a soccer field would be the conflicting schedules.

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Sterling has both fall and spring soccer leagues. During the fall and spring, the fields in Holyoke are in use by the softball and baseball teams.

The paint needed to distinguish the field of play in the outfield would likely upset those associated with the baseball and softball programs during the season. Without having measured off the soccer field lengths in the outfield of the baseball field, it is hard to tell if more than one field would fit in the designated area without having to tear down the outfield fence.

Bennett also mentioned that it may be time to further develop the rec program. Other than the swimming pool, baseball and softball, those who want to play other youth sports generally are forced to look at what is offered in other towns.

GOCO chooses who is awarded grant money based on a points system. Of the 100 possible points, up to 15 points worth of criteria related to the public process can be gained. By holding the public discussion, the City of Holyoke may pick up more public process points than they have in the past.

City officials report

Holyoke Police Chief Doug Bergstrom reported that from May 30-June 12, HPD received 67 calls for service, made two arrests, issued one citation, wrote four reports and gave out 14 warnings.

Other business

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In other business June 18, the council:

—donated \$1,000 to Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department for fireworks for the 4th of July.

—donated 15, one-day swim passes to Baby Bear Hugs.

—renewed the annual lease agreement with Holyoke Golf Club, Inc.

—renewed the liquor license for Lucky's Liquor.

—approved a travel request for Kathy Olofson to attend the GOCO workshop in Yuma Tuesday, June 25.

—hired Danielle Brandt as a lifeguard and increased the wages for Meg Strauss and Brittney Protsman for earning their WSI.

—approved a retail warehouse storage permit to allow Holyoke Hotels, LLC to store liquor outside of the previously approved licensed area.

Holyoke Enterprise June 27, 2013