

City Council
September 25, 2024
5:00 pm

Atlantic City Council met for a work session in the Council Chambers at City Hall with Mayor Garrett presiding. Council members present were: Otte, Kennedy, Behrens, McDermott, Sarsfield, Halder, and Brink. Absent: None. Also present: City Administrator John Lund, City Clerk Laura McLean.

Motion by McDermott; second by Kennedy to approve agenda as posted. All ayes. Motion carried.

Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Behrens; second by Kennedy to approve discussion items.

Housing:

House at 506 W. 10th was purchased by the City. It has been assessed and must be demolished. Council discussed options for this lot including Homes for lowa or other type of low income housing development. The City's housing fund has money available.

Council discussed strategy of code enforcement vs condemning dilapidated and abandoned structures. Code enforcement takes a lot of time and effort, and there are equity issues because many property owners lack the resources to bring properties up to code. Could the low-moderate income (LMI) fund be used to help with this? Council decided to work together to create guidelines for when and how the City will intervene with dilapidated structures. Otte mentioned that this would be included in the Comprehensive Plan that is being developed.

Treescape Project:

Snyder & Associates were hired to propose a process and options for dealing with the problem of downtown trees that are overgrown and affecting sidewalks and businesses.

Discussion that the problem isn't too bad right now, but will only get worse. Any work to address this problem could come under the same bond as the other downtown projects. There are 60 trees, almost all of which are healthy, but have probably never been trimmed. When the trees were planted, there was no plan made for maintaining them. These trees were supposed to cap out at 20' tall but some are 60' or more.

Council discussed long-term options and factors to consider. Christmas in Atlantic relies on the trees to bring in tourism. Trimming trees might require lights to be adjusted or rehung.

The Council asked the City Administrator to check with Snyder on whether their evaluation is complete and what recommendations they have.

Sidewalks:

The Supreme Court handed down a decision that affects City liability for sidewalk safety. In case of injury, the City could be held liable if it failed to enforce sidewalk maintenance.

The City Administrator will bring the relevant legal information for the Council to review; research whether LMI funds could be used to help citizens pay for repairs; and research the City's previous sidewalk maintenance program.

McDermott will check at the school on whether a group of students would be willing to volunteer to survey sidewalks to identify potential issues and report back to the street department.

Sunnyside Pool:

YMCA Director Dan Haynes sent a report to the City Administrator after closing Sunnyside Pool for the year. The admissions were down a little from 2023, even with a significant boost during RAGBRAI. The pool needs to be painted. The City loses money operating the pool, which is typical for cities our size. Haynes said that the Y would be willing to manage the Pool again next summer, but the sooner they get the contract, the better so there is time for planning and promotion.

Haynes also noticed that next year the pool will face competition from the splash pad. Families using the splash pad will use the public bathrooms near the tennis courts. Discussion about opening an outside window for concession sales to splash pad users who are not pool members. The pool director would like to purchase lily pads instead of a slide to enhance the pool next year.

Decision about management of the pool will go to the Council for a vote in October.

Streetlights:

Council members have been hearing comments from citizens about the brightness of the street lighting. Streetlights are managed through AMU not the City.

Ward Listening Sessions:

The city is currently forming a Comprehensive Plan Committee to begin updating the current five-year comprehensive plan. The Mayor suggested that Council members schedule listening sessions in their wards during October-November to gather SWOT analysis responses for the committee to use in their work with Danielle Briggs, the facilitator from SWIPCO. As a new council member, Sarsfield passed out invitations throughout his ward to a listening session at the Venue. This was well attended and productive.

In other business, the Mayor handed out the new EMS flyer and discussed talking points about the Vote Yes on EMS initiative.

Council discussed that the City is losing thirteen jobs with the shutdown of Yelloh (formerly Schwan's). Discussion of job loss in southwest Iowa. Sarsfield recently hosted several young out-of-state guests who appreciated many aspects of Atlantic but saw the need for more entertainment options. Discussion of sending visitors "Thanks for visiting Atlantic" postcards.

Halder asked the City Administrator for an update on a local business whose lease is in arrears, and on the policy about side-by-sides which is in process.

Motion by Sarsfield; second by Halder to adjourn at 7:08 p.m. All ayes. Motion carried.


Grace N. Garrett, Mayor

ATTEST:


Laura McLean, City Clerk