

Community garden gets green thumbs up for watering from hydrant

By Jeanne Davant

Manitou Springs City Council on Tuesday agreed to let the Manitou Springs Community Garden to water plots with a tank that would be filled from a nearby fire hydrant.

The Manitou Springs Community Garden Organization and Save the Flats are creating the community garden on Higinbotham Flats. The groups had hoped to tap into a water line installed to serve the storage units owned by Bethesda Development but found they could not tap into the line because of an agreement that would have required them to pay tens of thousands of dollars to Bethesda.

The fee is spelled out in a cost recovery agreement signed by then-City Administrator Fred Burmont in 2003, but there is no record that it ever went before Council for approval. That led Council members to question whether it is binding.

"Right now the way I read it, we don't have an agreement," Mayor Marc Snyder said. "Generally, the city's role is to enforce a cost recovery agreement. In 2007 we got out of the cost recovery business, and we don't even know if we have that authority now."

Another question is exactly where the water line runs. It's shown on Bethesda's development plan for the storage units, but city personnel haven't been able to find it.

Snyder recommended asking City Attorney Jeff Parker to investigate whether the cost recovery agreement is valid. Meanwhile, Council agreed by consensus that the city will allow the community garden to fill a 1,500-gallon water tank from the fire hydrant.

The garden sponsors have asked the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board for a \$950 grant to pay for the water tank.

Other financing for the project will come from membership fees, an Adopt-A-Plot program, a Garden Contributor program and additional grants.

The garden will consist of up to 25 plots located on land owned jointly by the city, Save the Flats and Mann.

Mann said that only 11 plots would be sold this year because of uncertainty about the water supply. Eleven members have been accepted.

So far, the garden beds are framed and nearing completion, and berms are in place, Mann said. Fence postholes have been dug, and the fence will be raised within the next week.

In other business, Council...

- Discussed a plan for hiring a city administrator. Snyder said he wanted to create a job description, get consultant advice on the best way to organize city staff and how Council could enhance the city administrator position. He said he hoped to accomplish those goals over the summer and hire a city administrator by Jan. 1, 2011. Councilman Matt Carpenter said he agreed with the goals but wanted a shorter timeline for hiring the administrator. Snyder, Councilwoman Ingrid Richter and Acting City Administrator Mike Leslie will draft a proposal for consultants and other needed documents.

- Reviewed proposed guidelines for bonfires, open burning, recreational fires, fireworks, burn restrictions and burn bans.

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