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Press Release

Three Arkansas City boards meet Monday after summer hiatus

Building Trades, Human Relations, Retired Citizens Advisory boards all meet

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (September 15, 2015) — Three Arkansas City boards met Monday to resume their regular business after each observed a summer hiatus of at least two months.

The Building Trades Board met in the commission room at City Hall, 118 W. Central Ave., to discuss code enforcement issues and approve the hiring of a part-time combination inspector.

The Human Relations Commission met in the east conference room at City Hall to discuss plans for the 2016 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration of Unity with the event's new organizer.

The Retired Citizens Advisory Council met at the Senior Citizens Center, 320 South A St., to review the center's Friday night dances and discuss other issues.

Building Trades Board

The Building Trades Board, which has not met since late May, establishes criteria for licensing and regulating tradesmen and contractors. It is composed of two electricians, two plumbers, two general contractors, two HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) contractors and a layman.

Those attending were Mark Bartlett, Dave Billings, Carl Bowman, Jim Graham and Kent Hinson.

Public Works Director Eric Broce, board secretary Terice Watts, Robert Brunell and City of Winfield inspector Rod Haney, who is assisting Arkansas City on a part-time basis, also were in attendance.

The board discussed several issues that have arisen, including an increase in unlicensed or unpermitted work, since combination inspector Travis Guess left the City's employment in June.

For immediate release

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Billings commended Haney for helping to fill in, but said Arkansas City needed to find its own inspector. Broce explained that there are some good candidates for that position, but he first wants to hire a new neighborhood services superintendent to train and oversee a future combination inspector.

Broce said filling that supervisory position might take some time due to a lack of qualified candidates and Haney said cities all across Kansas are dealing with the same problem.

In the meantime, Broce said Robert Brunell, who has assisted the City in the past with code enforcement, was willing to work on a part-time basis through The Arnold Group, a Winfield-based temporary staffing service. The board voted unanimously to recommend that the City bring in Brunell.

The board also agreed to begin the process of moving toward the 2015 code cycle from the current 2012 cycle, but decided to let Haney arrange a joint training meeting with the Winfield board of trades.

Board members also discussed what constitutes an emergency repair and when contractors should obtain a permit, as well as the billing process and time frame for pulling a permit.

Board members Zach Graber, Mike Hammel, Brian Lawrence, Kyle McNally and Fire Chief Bobby Wolfe were absent from Monday's meeting. The board discussed possible new members.

The board's next meeting will be at 5:15 p.m. Oct. 8 in the commission room at City Hall.

Human Relations Commission

The Human Relations Commission, which did not meet in the summer, represents diverse segments of the City's population. Up to nine members are appointed to three-year terms.

Those attending were board secretary Lesley Shook, board chair Tammy Lanman-Henderson, JoAnn Bierle, Kim Hager, Debra Olivas and Daniel Yocum. Charles Jennings also was present.

The commission's main order of business was discussing a transition in the planning of the annual Celebration of Unity event, usually held the Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Cowley College.

The board wants Jennings, who is the pastor of Great Grace Family Worship Center, to take over the planning and managing of the event, but it will remain available to help and support the celebration.

Jennings said it was not his intent to make the ceremony more religious, but rather to highlight that King's mission was bigger than simply improving race relations — it was to recognize all human rights.

He said there has been too much focus on the negative aspects of the Civil Rights period and not enough attention paid to King's positive, hopeful and visionary message.

Both Jennings and the commission agreed that they want to maintain the youth involvement — such as children's choirs, and the Boy and Girl Scouts — that has been a part of the ceremony for years.

The plan for now is that Great Western Dining still will cater the event, with the Soroptimists of Arkansas City continuing to serve as hosts. But the event might be moved to a day other than Sunday.

The Human Relations Commission's main focus will shift to the Joe B. Avery Community Spirit Award, which is awarded annually at the unity celebration to a citizen who displays exemplary service.

Jennings said the award was created when he still was on the commission in order to celebrate the spirit of Avery, who served on the commission from the time it was created until his death in 2008.

"Joe sat through some very tumultuous meetings in Arkansas City (during the Civil Rights period) and was part of a solution," Jennings said. "He offered to resign from the board (in his last few months), but I asked him to stay. I said, 'It just means something for your name to be part of this board.'"

The commission plans to start with a pool of the Community Cornerstone Award recipients for this year, but also is looking for other nominees to consider before it makes a final selection in November.

The board's next meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 5 in the east conference room at City Hall.

Retired Citizens Advisory Council

The Retired Citizens Advisory Council, which did not meet in July or August, governs the operations of Arkansas City's Senior Citizens Center. Five of its seven members must be at least 62 years old.

Those attending were Senior Center director Kristin Sparks, board chair Carol Goldwater, Jerri Achenbach, Jack Givens, Gary Humiston, Glen Morrison and newly appointed member Larry Gilmore.

The board's main action was voting unanimously to raise the price of admission for its Friday night dances from \$5 to \$6, starting in the second week of October.

The change will be advertised in promotions for the center's next two dances on Friday and Oct. 2.

"I'm not against it because I think that's still reasonable, and they get a good meal," Givens said.

Most of the senior centers in the surrounding area already charge \$6, Sparks said. She added that raising the price could help with the band's travel costs and the cost of keeping the center open.

Most of the people who attend the dances hail from outlying cities such as Haysville, Wichita and Ponca City, Okla., Goldwater said. She expressed hope that more Ark City residents will participate.

The board also discussed, but took no action on reducing the number of dances from three per month to two per month. The idea might resurface if attendance continues to decline.

Sparks reported that the center had obtained a new copier, and outlined her plans for some kind of brochure or flier to promote the center's activities and the services it offers.

The council's next meeting will be at 2 p.m. Oct. 12 at the Senior Citizens Center, 320 South A St.