

Contact: Nick Hernandez
Phone: (620) 441-4415
Fax: (620) 441-0869
nhernandez@arkansascityks.gov

City Manager's Office
City of Arkansas City
118 W. Central Ave.
Arkansas City, KS 67005



News Release

Town hall meeting scheduled for Monday night at Senior Center

Officials seek open dialogue with citizens on beautification, code enforcement

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (October 14, 2016) — The City Commission of Arkansas City voted 5-0 on Sept. 20 to schedule a special town hall meeting to discuss beautification and code enforcement.

The meeting will be at 7 p.m. Monday at the Arkansas City Senior Citizens Center, 320 South A St.

The meeting had to be rescheduled from Oct. 6 due to inclement weather that night.

Members of both the City Commission and the Beautification and Tree Advisory Board will be in attendance at Monday night's town hall meeting.

The goal of the meeting is to listen to private citizens on how best to help to jumpstart efforts to clean up and beautify properties before they have to be cited and ultimately condemned.

City Manager Nick Hernandez's goal is to reduce tax dollars spent on the demolition of buildings by allocating smaller amounts on a case-by-case basis to beautify a larger number of properties by preventative maintenance through citizen initiatives in order to prevent dilapidation.

Part of the meeting will be to educate the public about these efforts and the code enforcement process. The rest will consist of an open dialogue with interested individuals and nonprofit organizations.

A recently approved charter ordinance that goes into effect at the end of the month will allow code enforcement officials to issue notices to appear in municipal court. But that is a method of last resort.

"Issuing a ticket and ultimately abating the property ourselves is the last thing we want to do, as it typically does not address the underlying issue for how the property got in that condition," Hernandez said.

"Ark City is a beautiful community and some homeowners just need a helping hand," he added.

For immediate release

more

“We really need to encourage neighborhoods — churches, youth groups, whatever it may be — to try to identify areas where they can clean up. Maybe it’s cleaning yards out for an elderly or disabled citizen, painting a house, or trimming trees. Every little bit helps.”

Hernandez described a model in which the City, under the direction and recommendation of the Beautification and Tree Advisory Board, could award groups with micro-grants to perform proposed work.

“Maybe we pay for paint or paintbrushes,” he said. “Maybe we haul off the trash for the volunteers.

“We want to try to encourage those local groups to provide assistance through voluntary work, rather than us just going out and ticketing the property owner right away, which rarely solves the problem.”

He also suggested the idea of the City purchasing several small mowers and loaning them out.

Hernandez said the advantage of relying on neighborhood groups is that they are familiar with their neighbors — they know who really needs the help and who doesn’t need it.

“(Citizens) come to us and want us to do something,” said Mayor Duane Oestmann. “I think it’s a good idea to get neighborhoods to get involved with it. I think that does more good than what we do.”

City officials have had preliminary discussion with representatives some local organizations, but an open dialogue is desired at the meeting with all interested groups to maximize feedback and cooperation.

Any individual or group interested in being a part of this beautification effort is encouraged to attend Monday’s meeting and join the discussion. The public also is welcome to attend the information portion.

Citizens may watch a replay of the Sept. 20 City Commission meeting at youtu.be/uWsR9lsg1HM.

In other business Oct. 4, the City Commission:

- Witnessed Oestmann issuing proclamations that Oct. 9-15 is Fire Prevention Week and Oct. 18 is Unwavering Support for Uncommon Heroes Day in Arkansas City.
- Unanimously approved the following consent agenda items: approval of the Sept. 21 regular meeting minutes as written; ratifying Oestmann’s appointments of Dennis Rittle to the Outstanding Young Student Award Committee, and Tammy Lanman-Henderson to the Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board.

- Heard a first reading of and unanimously approved an ordinance exempting the application of K.S.A. 41-719(c) to allow the consumption of alcoholic liquor from 6 p.m. to midnight Oct. 27 at a designated area of Wilson Park for the Arkalalah All Reunion concert.
- Unanimously approved a resolution authorizing Addendum No. 1 to the contract agreement between the City and Smith & Oakes, Inc. for engineering design and inspection services for the Summit Street and Radio Lane paving improvements and water line replacement project. The contract, which is for an amount not to exceed \$33,050, accounts for two additional water lines.
- Directed Public Works Director Eric Broce to look into the cost of an emergency repair for a 4-inch water line at 11th Street and Chestnut Avenue. The new line would be a 6-inch water line.
- Discussed whether to acquire property west of Riverview Cemetery that could be used in the future to expand the cemetery grounds. The commissioners ultimately decided that it would be a better use of taxpayer money to look into purchasing a large columbarium to inter ashes and designating a portion of the existing cemetery for such cremains. Hernandez said cemetery sexton Marcus Lynn would begin planning such an addition for the fiscal year 2018 budget.
- Discussed again the traffic concerns on North First Street, behind Family Dollar. Neighborhood residents Ken Harader and Vickie Jackson both spoke about the issue. No action was taken.

###