

GKN receives tax abatement

Written by Administrator

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The progress at GKN was one of the highlights at the City of Salem council meeting last Monday night. GKN controller Robert Clark attended the meeting along with Washington County Economic Growth Partnership Director Lana Sullivan.

Clark said the company is currently wrapping up a \$1 million investment, as well as a project for Chrysler. He said additional employees were hired in August and November.

He told the council a \$4.2 million investment is on the table for 2011, with hopes of increasing to a \$10 million investment within three years.

Clark is from Canada and was moved to the Salem plant two years ago for a three-year project to help make the local plant more profitable.

Mayor David Bower said GKN is one of the "bright spots" in the city and the city will do whatever it can to help the company.

The company currently has 226 employees and hopes to add 50 full-time jobs in the next year. The average pay at GKN is \$16 an hour, without benefits.

Clark and Sullivan asked the council to approve \$700,000 in real estate and property tax abatements for the company. Sullivan pointed out that although the company is asking for the abatement, they are still paying \$1.2 million in local income taxes.

The council voted unanimously to approve the abatement.

In other business:

Fire chief Roger Pennington said an inspector recently visited the city and found the current warning system to be insufficient. The current siren was originally installed to alert volunteer firefighters. The siren will be replaced with four sirens for a proper outdoor warning system. Pennington said this was one of the mayor's concerns when he took office three years ago and they are happy it's going to be updated.

The council discussed an ordinance regarding firearms. Police Chief Scott Ratts said there have been several issues with bows and arrows, as well as injuries and damages from BB guns. He said there are issues that aren't covered by the ordinance, which he would like to see fixed. Council member Nancy Fultz questioned whether people could use BB guns to scare away pesky animals and Ratts said he'd prefer people use the animal control officer for those issues. She then questioned people being able to use field arrows. Ratts said he doesn't want to differentiate between the different types of arrows; they would all be covered under the ordinance. Council member Danny Libka voted to approve the first reading of the ordinance, seconded by Wally Terkhorn. The first reading passed 4-1 with Fultz voting against it.

The council elected Leslie Leis as council president for 2011. The meetings will continue to be held on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. at city hall.