

City Council takes a closer look at city properties

Written by George Browning

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The first three rules of real estate are location, location, location, and at times it felt like the Salem City Council were talking like realtors during their most recent meeting that took place on November 12. Three public hearings were held throughout the evening, two of which involved the vacating of property within Salem's city limits.

The first public hearing dealt with a platted alley located within the James F. Persise First Addition. A request was made to vacate the alley, which runs through several different property lines. Those nearby property owners were invited to discuss the matter, but only Jerry Sullivan came to speak before the council.

Sullivan said that the alley is currently in a state of disrepair, full of overgrown foliage and dead trees, and he was concerned that the eyesore would go unattended if the city chose to vacate the area. "If it's not getting taken care of now when it's a public alley, it won't be taken care of then," he said. Mayor Bower said he would get the wheels of local government turning and look into cleaning up the alley as soon as possible. The motion passed unanimously.

A similar hearing was held for the proposed vacating of an unnamed street located between Elm Street and Etzler Drive. The right-a-way was never formerly platted. With no residents in attendance to discuss the proposal in detail, the council quickly passed this motion as well.

The night's third and final public hearing dealt with an additional appropriation of \$130,000 from the General Fund to the Common Council fund. Clerk-Treasurer Patrica Persinger explained that the appropriation was going to cover health care insurance costs. The city has the funds necessary to cover the costs, but they simply had not appropriated enough money. Persinger added that more money was already appropriated in anticipation of next year's costs. The motion passed unanimously.

The council also discussed a proposal to rezone the old City Garage, located on W. Mulberry Street, for business purposes. The Garage has been sitting unused for quite some time now and it has been a continual topic of conversation at the council's meetings this year. "You've tried to sell it before," City Attorney Andrew Wright reminded the councilmen, "but no one's wanted to bid." Wright said that the large costs and complexity of trying to utilize the Garage under its current residential zoning were factors that kept potential buyers away.

"If we can zone it, I think logically we could rent it," Bower said. The Mayor was unsure whether the building was even sellable at this point and suggested that renting the space under new business zoning would be more fruitful for the city. He suggested that the Garage could be temporarily rented out to fledgling local businesses or even used as an expansion for Salem's Animal Control department. Plans are far from concrete as of now, but the motion to rezone the Garage passed unanimously.

The Salem City Council holds their meetings at 7:30 pm on the second Monday of every month in City Hall's council chamber. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.