

Salem City Council April update

Written by

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The beginning of April usually heralds the busiest part of the national tax season, and the city of Salem was not immune to its effects, as was proven during the City Council's monthly meeting on Monday, April 8.

The first part of the Council's evening was spent doing some civic "spring cleaning". They discussed the renewal of tax abatement agreements between the City and several local businesses. Sabrina Westfall, of the Washington County Economic Growth Partnership, assisted the Council in going over financial records and figures.

Many of these companies are in the last one or two years of ten year abatement cycles, making it imperative that they have their agreements reforged. Some of the companies who had their tax abatement agreements renewed included GKN Sinter Metals, John B. Shine, John Jones Body shop, Jay C food store, and Salem True Value Hardware. Westfall said she had a couple businesses file late this year, so the Council will pick-up the renewal process at next month's meeting.

They next turned to an ordinance first read at last month's meeting regarding trash pick-up in Salem. Ordinance 1454 states that residents cannot be put out on the curb more than 24 hours before scheduled trash pick-up. A vote was postponed until April's meeting so that Attorney Andrew Wright could make a simple edit to the ordinance's language. It now explains that citizens do not need to buy a trash can in order to comply with the regulation, however all trash must be collected into a suitable container that can withstand the elements or scavenging animals.

But one final question still held the Council back from taking a vote – how would the city enforce this policy? Police Chief Troy Merry suggested that officers could keep an eye on known violators and write up citations when necessary. Mayor David Bower wasn't very fond of using the police force to oversee what's essentially a residential issue, and he suggested that perhaps the Street or Building departments could deal with trash violations.

After further discussion, the Council agreed to continue looking into the issue, and they will hear a 3rd reading the ordinance in May.

The last major discussion of the night involved the possible sale of police department radios. Chief Merry explained that a digital radio mandate is coming down the pipeline sometime after 2014, and the department's current car and portable radios are unable to meet the digital requirements.

He proposed that the City consider selling the police department's current set of about a dozen car radios now for a small financial gain. Merry said these radios will become useless to the force once the mandate goes into effect, but someone else may be interested in acquiring them if they act fast to sell them. He estimated that they could sell enough radio for a profit around \$4000. "It won't be everything that we need," he said about the monetary figure, "but it'll be a start." The Council will be looking into a potential sale.

The Salem City Council meets on the second Monday of every month in City Hall's council chambers. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings.