

?Salem Common Council continues to pinch pennies

Written by

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? The Salem Common Council met in regular session on Thursday, October 16, with all members present except for Leslie Leis. The minutes of previous meetings, payroll requests and all claims were approved.

Council members took several measures in their ongoing efforts to cut spending and save money in anticipation of tax revenue shortfalls in 2009. The first of such actions was to unanimously approve a motion freezing the salaries of all elected city officials for 2009.

Salem Clerk/Treasurer, Pat Persinger asked for, and received permission to transfer monies among various funds in order to make sure the funds do not have negative balances. In addition, Persinger told the Council that the city received an advanced draw on property tax revenue which should be enough money to get through the end of the calendar year.

Mayor David Bower told the Council that Salem has received a Safe Routes to School grant in the amount of \$244,000. The purpose of the grant is to establish safe walking routes to Salem schools for students. Bower emphasized that there is no local matching requirement for this grant. Bower also said that efforts are underway to combine this grant with the walking trail grant received by the city some time back. If the two projects can be dove tailed as per Bower's vision, then a walking trail will extend from the YMCA on Shelby Street to the ball parks on east Highway #56.

In other business, the Council revisited the issue of customer deposits for sewer service provided by the city. Bower indicated that the ordinance, as written, was not what he had in mind when he proposed the idea during the summer. According to Bower, the current wording would place undue financial burden on people whose service was disconnected because of non-payment. After a brief discussion, new wording was proposed and will be considered at the next Common Council meeting.

The Council approved a request to offer city employees payroll deduction options for charitable contributions. The funding would flow through the Washington County Community Foundation and earmark payroll deductions to approximately ten charities.

The Council received letter of resignation as Cemetery Sexton from Arthur Hardin, Jr. as well as a retirement letter from Lawrin Gould.

As a final piece of business, Bower informed the Council that "points of interest" signs would be installed in proximately to the "Welcome to Salem" signs on major thoroughfares entering Salem. The new signs will include:

- Salem Speedway;
- Lake John Hay;
- Beck's Mill;
- Delaney Creek Park;
- Lake Salinda, and:
- The John Hay Center.

With no further business to conduct, the Council adjourned until the next regularly scheduled meeting on November 10.