

City Council welcomes interim administrator

Retired Spencer city manager will help out during search

By Travis Fischer
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The Charles City Council welcomed an interim city administrator during its regular meeting on Monday, July 7.

Dan Gifford, who recently retired as the city manager of Spencer, will be working part-time starting Tuesday as the city's temporary administrator.

"I'm just here for a short time to keep things going in the right direction," said Gifford. "I'm happy to help out where I can."

To that end, the council met with Brent Hinson of Hinson Consulting, the firm that has been tasked with finding candidates for the position on a permanent basis.

Hinson and the council reviewed details about the city, the job description and the qualifications for candidates to consider.

"We'll try to put you in a position to have multiple good choices to work with," said Hinson.

The preliminary schedule has interviews slated for September, which had the council working

out which days the majority of them would be available to meet with candidates.

In other business, the council approved the reappointment of Rachel Mack and Stephanie Williams for another term on the Library Board, thanking them for their continued service.

The council also approved two street closure requests around Central Park for upcoming events in August. National Night Out, a free community event organized by the Police Department, will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 5, while Art-a-Fest, the Charles City Art Center's annual festival, is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 16.

CONTINUING OLD BUSINESS, the council held a public hearing and first reading for an ordinance to vacate the unused portion of Cedar Street otherwise adjacent to an other-wise landlocked parcel owned by council member DeLaine Freeseeman, who abstained from acting on the ordinance.

The council also approved a quote from Chatfield Brothers

Repair to refurbish Fire Engine 252 as part of a plan to update two Fire Department engines, vacated an unused portion of 13th Avenue right-of-way to CCLP Enterprise LLC, and set a date to renew the support agreements with the Charles City Area Development Corp. and Main Street Charles City.

With renovations to Lions Field Pool complete, the council approved the final payment to Woodruff Construction for the project, coming in at a total of \$367,426.52 which was 3.4% above the original bid amount due to additional joint and crack work being done.

Finally, the council approved the termination of the joint administrative board for the SW Bypass Urban Renewal Area. The last of its kind in the state, the TIF district has been jointly managed by city and county, creating unnecessary redundancy in its governance. A new agreement has been made to divest the county from the TIF district, putting it in line with the other districts managed by the city.



Submitted photos

YC Homes provided photos of interior spaces on a housing renovation project it completed in Nora Springs as examples of its quality work.

PERMIT

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times that his plan would reduce traffic through the area, from Gilbert Street up Glenwood Road and beyond.

Changing from 33 motel rooms to 10 to 12 mostly two-bedroom apartments, or maybe 16-18 apartments if the lower building is renovated, would cut the traffic associated with that property by 50 to 60%, Young said.

City Engineer John Fallis said the way the area is currently zoned someone could buy the property, make needed repairs and continue using it as a motel.

Young said his plans will add to the attractiveness of the area, with all new interiors and new exterior siding.

"We do everything we do all brand new," he said. "Nothing's missed. All new electrical, all new plumbing, all new firewalls, completely redone. Everything is done up to code, and then we turn around and rent them."

He said one of the reasons he develops property the way he does is to prevent things happening in neighborhoods like the recent history of the Hartwood Inn.

"WE TURN THEM INTO A NICE, beautiful property," he said.

Young said he isn't sure what will happen to the building on the southeast side of the Gilbert Street/Glenwood Road intersection. It may have portions in the floodplain, and the building may be beyond repair.

If he decides to tear it down that will happen quickly and the lot will be cleared. He said one possibility for that property could be a twin home (duplex)

building.

The other two buildings on the north side of Glenwood Road "I can make beautiful," Young said, adding that total investment in the property would be about \$1 million, although he also said it could be about \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

The swimming pool on the property would be filled in and the pool house would be converted to an apartment.

RENTS ON THE APARTMENTS could be in the \$1,000 to \$1,200 per month range, he said.

Amber Morud, property manager for TD Rentals, answered several questions from the members of the Board of Adjustment present at the meeting – Gene LaBounty, Alan Powell and Krista Noah.

Morud said they typically lease their apartments for a year then go month-to-month; they usually have a quick turnaround whenever there is a vacancy and usually have several people apply for a vacancy; that they do income checks, criminal record checks and reference checks on potential tenants; and that she has few problems with tenants.

The members of the Board of Adjustment unanimously approved granting the conditional use permit.

City Engineer Fallis said there is a 30-day waiting period during which anyone can challenge the permit in district court before work can begin on the project.

Fallis also noted that the conditional use permit applies only to TD Young Rentals. If the company doesn't go ahead with the project the conditional permit goes away. Also, if the company would want to sell the property to someone else in the future, that potential buyer would also have to go before the Board of Adjustment to get

a conditional use permit in its name.

The Hartwood Inn property has had a troubled recent history, culminating in a foreclosure and sale at a Floyd County Sheriff's auction earlier this year.

The property had been vacant for more than a year and was described in court filings as abandoned. Even while it was operating, the facility was repeatedly cited by state and local inspectors for serious violations, including pest infestations, missing smoke detectors, unsanitary conditions and unauthor-ized long-term occupancy.

The motel's former operator, Gilbert Starble, attempted to rezone the property for apartment use while continuing to rent rooms, primarily to long-term tenants. Those efforts were denied by city officials, who also filed a civil case seeking penalties for ongoing code violations.

IN OCTOBER 2024, NEWTEK Small Business Finance LLC filed for foreclosure on the property after default on a \$400,000 SBA-backed loan. The loan had been issued in 2021 to Hartwood Hospitality Labs Inc. and NC One Trust, with Starble as both president and trustee, and also as the personal guarantor.

In January, a district court judge entered a foreclosure decree and awarded Newtek more than \$421,000, including interest and legal fees, and issued a writ of possession.

The property was sold at sheriff's sale on May 27 for \$306,000. The sole bidder was CCC Real Estate Holding Co., a subsidiary of NewtekOne Inc., the same parent company as the lender.

TD Young Rentals (Young Construction) is purchasing the property from CCC Real Estate Holding Co.



Press photo by Bob Steenson

Joshua Neupert was appointed the new Floyd County supervisor representing District 2, after being selected by a committee of county elected officials (from left) Auditor Morrigan Montagne, Treasurer Jessie Holm and Recorder Amy Assink. Neupert fills the position left vacant by the recent death of Supervisor Dennis Keifer.

APPOINT

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still call for a special election by least 257 signatures of eligible electors from that district to the County Auditor's Office within 14 days of the appointment.

Five persons had applied to be considered for the position. Applicants had been asked to submit an application letter, resumé and their answers to a list of 10 questions that the appointment group had put together.

Members of the appointment committee had few comments after some of the applicants made brief statements.

Recorder Amy Assink asked Neupert if he would have the time to fulfill the heavy demand of hours that supervisors have while working full time.

He replied that Cambrex supported his interest in becoming a supervisor and his current position gave him the flexibility he needed.

Assink said the members of the appointment group had some responsibility to consider the voters who had initially elected Keifer to the position.

All three members of the appointing group mentioned they had received several emails over the weekend regarding the applicants.

According to county records, 19 people sent email messages

to some or all of the three elector-ical candidates.

An examination of those messages by the Press showed 15 of the emails urged support for Neupert, and four urged support for Frank Rottinghaus.

Several of the messages said said the writers thought that Neupert would most closely follow the political philosophy of Keifer, especially regarding commercial wind energy rules in the county.

Two of the pro-Neupert letters also specifically urged against picking Frank Rottinghaus, citing what they claimed was a pro-wind energy stand.

AT THE MEETING, TREASURER Jessie Holm moved to appoint Neupert, Assink seconded, and the vote was 3-0 with those two and Auditor Morrigan Montagne all voting yes.

The other applicants who had been considered were:

- Dave Bahe, who has been a firefighter, reserve deputy and emergency medical technician as well as working several jobs before retiring; but who has been back at work doing custom woodworking and concrete projects, as well as being a custodian, bus driver and teacher's aide for Charles City Community School District.
- Aaron Hobert, who has worked at Metcal, a Mason City for more than 30 years and will be retiring in September.

- Doug Lindaman, a retired farmer who now oversees conservation Reserve Program activities for his farm property and five apartments.
- Frank Rottinghaus, who has been Floyd County treasurer for more than 28 years and who had served as an appointed supervisor in 1992.

One of the questions that was asked of applicants was, if residents of the district call for a special election, would they run for the office.

Neupert, Bahe, Hobert and Rottinghaus all said they would seek the nomination to run. Lindaman said it would depend on who else was running and the issues that were raised.

The supervisor position is considered a partisan position, so the Republican and Democratic parties could choose their candidates for a special election. Candidates could also run as no party.

On the question including political party affiliation, Bahe and Lindaman did not specify a political party, Hobert said he is registered independent, Rottinghaus said Democrat and Neupert said he would "closer align" with the Republican Party.

Montagne, Assink and Holm all ran for their offices as Republicans.

— See the five applicants' answers to the 10 questions with this story at www.charlescitypress.com



Press photos by Bob Steenson

Strike up the Band!

ABOVE: Guest Director Melissa Meyer, former band director at Turkey Valley Schools, directs the Charles City Municipal Band at its 4th of July Concert Friday evening behind the library.

RIGHT: Susan Jacob (in hat) takes the piccolo part in "The Stars and Stripes Forever."



APPEAL

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chief executive officer at the Medical Center.

FCMC said the appeal will delay the distribution of funds, but that hospital officials remain committed to following Stille's wishes.

"The appeal will likely prolong the process to build a cancer center, as well as incur more legal expenses for FCMC," the medical center said in a statement. "Despite this setback, FCMC remains committed to bringing the vision of providing oncology services in north Iowa to life."

Stille, a Nashua-area farmer who died in 2020, had stipulat-

ed in his will that FCMC would receive the bulk of his estate if it remained an independent hospital and used the funds to build and operate a cancer center. If that contingency was not met, Mayo was named as the alternate beneficiary, for Alzheimer's research.

Mayo had argued that FCMC's plans did not satisfy other language in the will describing preferred features of the cancer center, including onsite radiation treatment and a full-time oncologist.

Judge Stochl rejected those arguments, ruling that remaining independent was the sole binding condition and that FCMC's plans – including the use of contracted oncologists and partnering with other facilities for radiation services – satisfied

the will's intent.

Mayo's not released a public statement on the appeal.

In Iowa, cases that are appealed from the county district court level go to the Iowa Supreme Court, which can decide to accept the case itself, or – much more often – send it to the Iowa Court of Appeals.

At the appeals level, the court can affirm the district court ruling, reverse it, send it back to the district court for further action (such as a new trial), or modify the district court ruling.

The Supreme Court or Court of Appeals can also dismiss the appeal if it has a procedural or jurisdictional defect.

Appeals do not look at new evidence, but only examine whether legal errors occurred at the district court level.