

City settles with KEA

Summer Williams/St. Maries Gazette-Record

As one legal matter is resolved, another may begin.

The St. Maries city council is one step closer to resolving threatened litigation by Kootenai Environmental Alliance.

However, the council convened in executive session to discuss possible litigation concerning the water treatment plant.

At Monday's meeting, the council voted 4-1 to approve a resolution to allow Mayor Harry Grubham to sign the settlement agreement between the city and KEA. The approved resolution also will allow Celia Sibert, city treasurer, to write a check for \$3,647.50 payable to KEA for attorney fees.

KEA filed suit against the city of St. Maries in July. Through its attorneys, Bricklin & Newman LLP, the group sent the city a letter alleging the city had not met permit requirements before discharging wastewater into the St. Joe River.

Mayor Grubham has yet to sign the agreement. When that happens, the agreement will then be made public. Until then, details will not be made available.

During the meeting, city attorney Nancy Wolff said the agreement has been signed by KEA and will be brought back to the city to be signed by the mayor.

Ed Spooner was the dissenting vote. Virginia Beebe, Randy Willard, Randy Saunders and Jerry McCarter voted in favor of allowing the mayor to sign the resolution and for the city to cut a check for KEA's attorney fees.

The council also convened in executive session to discuss potential litigation involving the water treatment plant. Several problems continue to plague the plant, which was constructed 12 years ago.

A widening gap and cracked panels in the roof are just two problems that need have come up at the \$1.925 million plant. Additional problems include several water seeps on the west wall and there is a crack on the north wall of the plant. There are also structural issues on the inside of the plant in regards to a damaged beam.

In other business, the council awarded a bid for a timber sale in Section 34. The council awarded the bid to lone bidder Idaho Forest Group for \$274,682.50. The vote was unanimous.

The council will review the potential to have a land appraisal and timber cruise done on St. Joe-East. The council has considered selling the parcel of timber land the city owns.

More information will be brought before the council at their meeting in January concerning the costs of a timber cruise.

The council received a quote for an appraisal from Gem State Appraisers for \$3,200. It is estimated the city would pay \$1,500 to \$1,800 for a timber cruise. Both are required before the parcel can be sold. A title report will also be ordered.

Beer, wine and liquor licenses for area businesses were unanimously approved by the council for 2015. Councilman Judd Wilson, who joined the meeting late, proposed the council could review the rates they charge before issuing licenses for 2016.

Councilman Jerry McCarter brought a proposal to the council from the public works committee concerning dogs in city park during special events. He said the committee thought a policy that restricts dogs in city park during special events would be appropriate for the city.

"Basically, during special events in would be unlawful for any person to have a dog, whether it's on a leash or not, in the city park," he said.

Mr. McCarter added if an individual was caught they would be charged with an infraction and fined \$100.

"There is a subsection that this would not apply to service dogs or dogs used by police officers," he said. "If vendors with other circumstances wanted to have a dog at their booth, they would need to apply for an exemption permit."

The council voted unanimously to have Ms. Wolff draft an ordinance for the council's review.

Mayor Grubham indicated a citizen who lives near old dumpsite on St. Maries River Road, which is often used as a shooting range, with complaints. He said the individual said there was a bullet hole through his trailer. He directed the public works committee to look into the matter.

"This is where Ed Moya was thinking about putting a gun range," Mayor Grubham added. "We need to look into this and see if anything needs to be done."

The Dec. 22 meeting will be canceled and the public works and administrative committees will meet at a later date.