

Silent night hampers granary effort

City Council must keep mum until board acts

By Rachel Carter

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

The decision whether to demolish the Loveland Feed and Grain building could end up in the lap of the Loveland City Council.

Which, according to City Attorney John Duval, means City Council members have to stay out of it until the council knows if it will be involved.

That could mean disaster for a group of residents trying to save the 115-year-old building, because their plans hinge on the City Council doling out \$100,000 to help buy the building.

Within the first 10 minutes of their meeting Tuesday night, City Council members unanimously voted to go into executive session, or a closed meeting, to “receive legal advice concerning the Loveland Feed and Grain building,” said Mayor Larry Walsh.

When they returned about 20 minutes later, the council voted to share their legal advice with the audience — many of whom were residents coming to ask the council to support efforts to save the downtown landmark.

Duval said deciding whether to tear down the Feed and Grain building is basically a “quasi-judicial” process.

If the Historic Preservation Commission denies the request of owners Dean and Betty Anderson to demolish the building, the Andersons could appeal to members of the City Council.

“In that capacity, they have to be like judges in the sense that they have to keep an open mind,” Duval said.

If the City Council comments on the situation or contributes money, that “calls into question the integrity of the process.”

“It leaves the impression that the council has already made up its mind,” Duval said.

Knowing Feed and Grain supporters were in the audience, Walsh opened the meeting to public comments with, “Keep in mind that council will not ask any questions or make any comments.”

So, when resident Erin McLaughlin, who has spearheaded efforts to save the building,

got up to ask council members for their support, she already knew the answer.

“I do appreciate your situation,” she told the council, “but I’m going to address you so you can appreciate our situation.”

The group wants to raise money with hopes of buying the building from the Andersons — so the Andersons won’t sell to a developer who wants to tear down the building.

The group’s plan: Raise \$100,000 in donations from the community and ask the Loveland City Council for another \$100,000. That \$200,000 would serve as a cash match for a possible grant from the State Historical Fund.

The problem: The application for the grant is due April 1. An organization called Colorado Preservation Inc. offered to provide a \$200,000 loan as a cash match to the grant, with conditions that the city would pitch in \$100,000 and community donations would cover the other \$100,000 to pay back the loan.

If the council can’t promise money, the group’s plan to apply for a grant could be compromised.

McLaughlin asked the council Tuesday night to provide a letter of support for their grant application and to put their request for \$100,000 on the next meeting’s agenda.

All she got was silence.

After the meeting, McLaughlin said the group still plans to apply for the State Historical Fund grant.

The Loveland City Council voted to:

- Increase water rates 1 percent this year and each year after, possibly through 2027, to generate \$36 million in revenue to fund a future reservoir. The rate increase, which will start May 1, averages about 19 cents more per month on residential bills.
- Approve plans for a three-story, 80-unit senior housing development on the southeast corner of Wilson Avenue and 50th Street.
- Approve plans for a development that will include 30 duplexes and 18,000 square feet of commercial space on South Taft Avenue, just north of the Thompson School District Administration Building. The development will back up to a pond on the east side of Taft Avenue.