By Jan Rahn
Managing Editor

Citing lack of support from city council, four members of the Grant Cemetery Board resigned a short time prior to the regular meeting of the Grant City Council on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

Submitting letters of resignation were Gerald Werner, Daryl Snyder, Vance Kirkpatrick and Gerry Pankonin.

Remaining on the Cemetery Board are Dick Brixius and Rose Barry.

The cemetery board members indicated in their letters that they feel there is lack of backing from city council on the enforcement of cemetery bylaws.

The cemetery board had a recent run-in with a resident who erected a cemetery marker that was not in compliance with rules of the cemetery.

At a recent city council meeting, the cemetery board approached council with a request for funds to pursue legal counsel beyond what is already available through the city's attorney.

The cemetery board's request for outside legal counsel was denied, but the city's attorney will carry through with a case already set for trial (City of Grant vs Marvin Stumpf) on Sept. 2.

Under new business, new sirens for the city were discussed, a library report was given, and a rate increase resolution was passed.

New Sirens

Perkins County Sheriff Jim Brueggeman and Harlan Rahn, Grant Volunteer Fire Captain, gave a presentation on a new alert system as part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan for the City of Grant and Perkins County as a whole.

Seeking council's blessing to go forth in pursuit of funding for installation of new sirens, the two explained the role each county entity would play in coordinating an emergency alert system throughout the county.

Three old sirens within city limits could be replaced with two state-of-the-art radio-controlled sirens with a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant.

FEMA's 75 percent of the funding could be matched with money from the county, the City of Grant and the Suburban Fire Board.

Showing support of the effort, Ron Cochran, who maintains the cemetery and was present for the meeting, offered to help raise funds through Lions Club where he serves as a member.

Brueggeman is hopeful the Hazard Mitigation Plan will be approved by FEMA by the end of October.

Upon approval, a grant application for the sirens would be submitted which would then need separate approval.

The estimated cost as of last fall to replace the city's current siren system was $38,240.

Speaking on behalf of the fire department, Rahn said the suburban fire board is receptive to splitting the remaining 25 percent cost for replacing the old, worn out sirens.

They are very old and parts are no longer available, said Rahn. "We have a real need for this main siren (the one atop city hall) to be replaced."

Rahn cited an incident six years ago when a tornado was threatening the town. Power went out, the siren went down, and there was no way to reactivate it.

"We need to do something for the safety of the residents," he said.

Brueggeman indicated one of the new sirens would be placed near the courthouse and the other in the northeast part of town.

"The newer sirens really pierce the air," said Brueggeman, assuring council members they would be loud enough to cover the current city limits and well beyond, taking into account any future expansion or annexation.

Brueggeman will meet with the other villages in Perkins County to explain participation in the county's overall disaster plan and to get their feedback on erecting sirens for emergency alert.

Rate Increases

Council members approved a rate increase for sewer rates, dog licenses and building permits.

• Sewer Rates: Effective Oct. 1, sewer rates will increase $1.50 from $12 per month to $13.50.

• Dog Licenses: A flat fee of $5 for all dog licenses will be charged—male, spayed female and unspayed female dogs. Former rates were $3 for male and spayed female and $5 for unspayed female.

• Building Permits: The fee for building permits has doubled. The fee for a building permit for $5,000 or less has been increased from $5 to $10.

Any permit requested over $5,000 will be issued at a rate of $2 per thousand dollars, which is an increase of one dollar from the previous fee.

In Other Business

• Librarian Robin Schroder presented the 2008-09 annual report for Hastings Memorial Library to the council.

The library became accredited through the Nebraska Library Commission in November 2008.

Internet access is free of charge from six public access computers as well as wireless internet for patrons with laptop capabilities.

Schroder pointed out otherhighlights of the year. During the winter Hatch's Super Foods gifted the library two laptops.

During the fiscal year, the internet stations were used 2,762 times.

There has been a substantial increase in library use, with 122 new cards issued in the past year.

There were nearly 9,900 checkouts during the period of October 2008 through July 2009.

An increase of 37 percent was seen in the summer programs, with 248 attending the 11 programs presented during June and July.

A total of 52 children ages three through sixth grade were enrolled in the reading program.

The librarians completed automation of the collection in February, with each piece given a barcode and entered into the computerized catalog.

Eighty new children's books were added with a grant of $1,420 in March.