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Housing grants dominate Auburn City Council meeting

(KLZA)-- The Auburn City Council took action Monday night on five requests for $10-thousand housing program grants and one for a free lot.

Following much discussion, and tie votes broken by Mayor Scott Kudrna, four of the six requests were approved, The votes followed the recommendation from the Keep Auburn Beautiful Committee on four of the six requests but it appears there has been a shift in how the grant funds can be used.

Mayor Scott Kudrna said the initial money in the program was for new housing, and infill housing to build a new house where an old house and been torn down.

Grants were approved for Richard and LeeAnn Warner who are building a new single family home in the Glenrock Addition at an estimated cost of more than $340-thousand. Council members Rick Janssen, Tom Clark and Katie Billings cast nay votes. Council members Jeff Jeanneret, Shawn Clark and Chris Erickson voted in favor with Mayor Kudrna casting the deciding vote.

The Keep Auburn Beautiful Committee recommended approval.

A request form Nick Bantz for a free lot in consideration of him clearing the lot at 1300, 7th Street at his own expense and constructing a house within a year was approved 4-2. The KAB recommended the request be approved.

Also approved was a request from Lonnie Haynes for money to use to renovate a house at 621 Central Avenue which has an estimated material list of $35-thousand. The vote was 4-2. The KAB had recommended the request be denied.

Also approved was a request from John Barnard for a grant to renovate a house at 710, 10th Street, which has an estimated cost of $8,900. The vote was 4-2 in favor. The KAB had recommended the request be denied.

The requests that were denied, were from the owners of the Arbor Manor Steakhosue and Motel who submitted a request for a grant to renovate the apartments above the steakhouse estimated to cost $15-20-thousand. The vote was 3-3 with Council members Erickson, Jeanneret and Tom Clark voting to deny and Mayor Kudrna also voting to deny the request. Also denied was a request from Brett and Lauren Vinson for funding to renovate a house at 2501 R. Street, with an estimated cost of $10,500. The KAB recommended denial of both requests.

While the Mayor prefers the money be used for new construction he said the Council members have the right to vote how they like.

Mayor Kudrna estimates there will be about $10-thousand left in the fund following Monday nights grant awards. He said he is concerned with the precedent set, it will create quite a bit of interest and an influx of new applications wanting funding for rehabilitation projects rather than new housing.

Prior to this year, there had been no applications for funding.

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