

Council saves money with software

KEITH BRYANT
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During a special City Council meeting Thursday, aldermen approved leasing court management software.

While the City Council approved purchasing Virtual Justice software during its June 26 regular meeting, Mayor Peter Christie said the purchase did not include enough user licenses

and the city would need three more.

“So when we started looking at the extra licenses, the price went up,” he said.

The next option, he said, was leasing.

Finance Director Cary Elsten said a lease with enough user licenses would see an initial cost of \$4,500 for setup, configuration, installation and training, after which the

city would be paying \$450 per month, totaling \$5,400 per year.

The lease, she said, would have to go into 2025 to exceed the cost of purchasing the software.

John Moeckel, network administrator for the city, said that the lease option also provides some flexibility. If the city needs to add or remove users, that can be done, and if new soft-

ware the city would rather use is released, the city doesn't have money tied up in this system.

“If we buy... it's kind of carved in stone,” he said. “But with a lease, you have the option to change that lease with 60 days' notice.”

The council unanimously approved repealing the ordinance calling for the software to be purchased, then approved the lease agreement.

Latham wins yard honor

Marilyn Latham of 2 Singleton Circle, won the Bella Vista Garden Club Yard of the Month award for July.

The club promotes and rewards exemplary yard care in Bella Vista and recognizes neighbors who demonstrate above-average efforts in maintaining their property, which contributes to the overall appearance of the community.

All homes in Bella Vista are eligible. Nominations are for the front and side yards jointly. One yard is chosen each month by Garden Club members who choose the yard that best exemplifies uniqueness, beauty and curb appeal.

Nominate a yard by emailing bvyardoft-



Photo submitted

Marilyn Latham in her front yard.

hemoth@gmail.com, or call 479-268-8325. Provide the address and the homeowner's name if known. All nominations will be in the running for future recognition.

Radio Club partners with city for emergency system

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The Bella Vista Radio Club met last week to discuss collaborating with the city to establish an emergency plan.

They will be meeting with emergency personnel this week to iron out additional details.

Club president and public safety committee volunteer Jack Fellenzer said the city needs to come up with an emergency communications system for occasions where the normal channels are inoperable. The club, he said, has a supply of FCC-licensed ham radio operators.

“Most people just look at it as a hobby — which 99 percent of the time it is,” he said.

But in an emergency, he said, skilled radio operators can provide communication options that otherwise

would not exist.

Joplin, he said, learned the hard way after it was hit by a tornado, which rendered citizens only able to communicate face-to-face or via text messages.

The club, he said, has an emergency communications handbook outlining standard operating guidelines, but these procedures are currently untested.

Additionally, he said, the upcoming meeting is important in part because it gives his club a chance to meet with the new police chief, James Graves, and ask questions and help get him up to speed on the plan. Moreover, he said, if Graves has experience with a program like this, he may have good input.

He'd also like to talk with Chief Graves and Fire Chief Steve Sims about getting individuals in their departments licensed to operate ham radios, he said, as well

as set up a radio system at Fire Station 4. That station is designed to serve as a backup City Hall.

“The idea is to have operators who could operate in place readily,” Fellenzer said.

Radio club treasurer Mark Whittlesey said that the procedures were put together with help from former police chief and radio club member Ken Farmer. The end result, he said, is an initial, basic plan.

“As of today, it's pretty much fair weather things,” he said.

The club, he said, could provide communications for bike events, for instance.

After meeting with emergency services, he said, the next step is to run mock scenarios and find weaknesses.

For more information about the club or the emergency plan, Fellenzer can

be reached at bvpublicsafety@cox.net. More information about the club can be found on its website at www.bellavistaradioclub.org.

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