

Humboldt facing financial difficulties

(KLZA) -- Bob Mendenhall was sworn in as Mayor of Humboldt on December 4 and he has had to immediately dig into the cities financial situation.

During a special Council meeting December 13th the Mayor stated the City is financially in poor condition.

During an interview with MSC News, Mayor Mendenhall discussed some of the issues the City of Humboldt faces, including a \$1.6-million water well project requiring payments of \$100-thousand annually. The City has also made swimming pool upgrades, spent cash on hand and borrowed money for the new fire station and funds have also been spent on a project to refurbish the City Auditorium.

Mayor Mendenhall said some significant measures are being taken to save money. All purchases over \$100 must be approved by the Mayor. Some employee work hours have been reduced.

The Cemetery Board agreed to loan the City up to \$75-thousand with the understanding the funds be paid back by the end of 2019 with interest. Humboldt's wastewater treatment plant is also in need of an upgrade.

Mendenhall says he has visited with Olsson & Associates Engineers who estimate the current plant has a life span of 3-5 years. The Council voted to have engineers working on plans to upgrade the facility discontinue their work for now.

Mayor Mendenhall said that when he was elected in November, he did not know the severity of the city finances. He said City staff contacted him about some checking account issues and the more he looked at the various accounts, the more negatives he discovered.

The City is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan at a cost of \$30-thousand. Half the amount is due in March with the remainder to be paid either in monthly installments or one final payment in September of \$15-thousand.

In addition, the city has a signed agreement to move forward with an automated metering system.

Mayor Mendenhall says he is not sure how small communities are to make the necessary upgrades to meet state standards in water, sewage and others that come with very expensive price tags.

The Mayor expects to have conversations with the City Attorney, and the various companies involved in the upgrades to help solve the financial issues.

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