

By JESSICA CRAWFORD

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It's a green light for the Halliburton project as of Tuesday evening's city commission meeting. The 2009 series industrial revenue bonds in the amount of \$1.2 million will be issued by the City of Liberal for the remodeling of the former Tradewinds facility by Polo Fields LLC owned by John Mallon.

The ordinance hit a glitch two weeks ago when it read the bonds to be issued were of the 2008 series, not the necessary 2009 series. With the passing of the ordinance, the city is now authorized to execute the lease, bond agreement and other documents necessary to complete the transaction, according to city manager Mark Hall.

Commissioners have been eager to get the project underway due to to the impact of Halliburton on a global level.

"This is a great project," commissioner Don Rash has said during past discussions of the ordinance. "Halliburton is a great company and this will be very good for Liberal."

Commissioners tabled a rather lengthy ordinance outlining the process of receiving and maintaining a business license within the city. The general consensus was the ordinance was worded in a way that was not pro-business.

The two main issues that concerned commissioners were the wording in the ordinance calling the licensing process an application and the fact that not having a current license would be considered a Class C violation with a maximum penalty of \$500 or a maximum of 30 days jail time.

“I am kind of hesitant here, in principle I agree we need a business license so we can keep track of people,” Vice Mayor Doug LaFreniere said. “But this kind of turned into that now an individual coming into the city will be putting in an application for approval or denial so the city then gets to decide who gets a business license and who doesn’t.

“You want to stay pro-business and you don’t want to create a hurdle that really just knocks an entrepreneur down out of his seat here,”

he continued. “Thirty days in jail for operating without one and \$500 a day fine?”

City attorney Shirla McQueen and city manager Mark Hall agreed to go back to the drawing board with the ordinance. The revamped ordinance will be presented at the next commission meeting on Feb. 24.

Housing and community development director Karen LaFreniere presented two new housing programs. The first-time homeowner program allows prospective homeowners to apply for up to \$3,000 for down payment assistance and senior housing opportunities that could help with repairs up to \$2,000.

“In an effort to come up with housing programs, we researched back and came up with these two,” LaFreniere said. “The programs should be in effect by around the first of April.”

“It looks very helpful,” commissioner Larry Koochel said of the programs. “It’s not too big of a give-away but it does take the edge off to get people started.”

Sewer evaluation time has been shortened to two months rather than three due to the unseasonably warm weather. Rather than taking reading from January, February and March, only the first two months will be used in the evaluation then rates will be reset.

“As of Friday,” city manager Mark Hall said, “you can start watering your yard.”