IRON RIVER—Blight ordinance enforcement was a topic of concern during the Iron River City Council meeting Wednesday. __PUBLIC__

"We don't have a (blight enforcement) officer and the budget shows that we can't afford one," Mayor Terry Tarsi told the council. Tarsi asked City Manager Perry Franzoi if city police might help enforce blight ordinances.

"There are a lot of things they can see," Tarsi said of city patrols. "If they would just make a note of it we could send violators a letter."

Tarsi listed blight enforcement as one of his major concerns since becoming mayor in 2011. He also questioned back taxes from unoccupied downtown buildings.

Franzoi also reported that additional lead removal costs at the Central School project will be paid by the Downtown Development Authority. Project managers and the city had sought an exemption after workers discovered double ceilings in two rooms and learned that additional window moldings needed to be treated for lead paint contamination.

"I just see this as the beginning to a never ending checkbook," member James Quayle told the DDA Tuesday when an additional $12,400 payment was approved.

Contractors, city officials and investors argued for the exemption during a conference call with Department of Environmental Quality and federal Environmental Protection Agency officials Jan. 11 but were denied. Tarsi said an official in Chicago refused the exemption fearing it may set a national precedent.

Lead paint abatement is a major hurdle as contractor wait to begin renovating the old school into Apple Blossom Apartments. Plans to add retail stores in the basement have been scrapped.

In other business, civil counsel Mark Tousignant told the board that documents dropping the city's lawsuit against John Hohensee have been mailed. The city had filed suit in Iron County Trial Court to force Hohensee to clean up debris left in the wake of a 2011 fire at River City Lanes.