

R-3 board votes on Stiles Building

Lee Stubbs
Editor

The Platte County R-3 School District should soon have a new building to add to its Platte City campus. After weeks of discussion, the R-3 Board of Education voted at a special meeting last Friday to purchase the 27,000 square-foot Stiles Building, located at 998 Platte Falls Road, adjacent to the Platte City Middle School. By a 4-2 vote, the Board approved the purchase price of \$1.9 million. The Board will pull the amount from its capital projects fund, then reimburse the district \$400,000 of the purchase price through a lease/purchase deal. That action would mean only \$1.5 million of capital project funds would be used.

“This building should serve the school district and its patrons well for many, many years,” R-3 Superintendent Dr. Mark Harpst said. The district plans to use the building to consolidate its administrative offices, for warehouse space, as a headquarters for its bus fleet and for other educational purposes.

The 4-2 vote was the second of the night. The first was a 3-3 deadlock on a motion to fund the entire \$1.9 million from the capital projects fund, which Harpst said stood at \$4.6 million. That resolution was supported by board members Dick Modin, Mary Temperelli and Karen Wagoner. Dave Holland, Board president Bob Shaw and Trish Stinnett voted against it. Board member Carey Rolofson was absent from the meeting.

Temperelli then offered to modify the previous resolution.

“Would your thoughts be different if we used only some of Fund 4 (capital projects fund) and funded the rest through lease/purchase?” she asked.

Holland said it would likely make a difference in his vote.

“I don’t feel comfortable taking that much out of Fund 4,” he said.

Temperelli then suggested the Board use \$1.5 million from Fund 4 and fund the remainder of the purchase through a lease/purchase arrangement.

“I think I could live with \$1.5 million,” Holland said.

Temperelli then made that motion and a second vote was taken. Holland switched his vote; Shaw and Stinnett still voted no.

Shaw, who had previously stated his objection to taking money from the capital projects fund or using the lease purchase mechanism to buy the building, said he believed the district’s voters should have had a say in such a significant purchase.

“I think a preferable way of doing it would be to put it on a bond issue and seek voter approval,” Shaw said. “However, a majority of the Board chose a different path. I support the Board’s decision 100 percent and will do my best to make it work for the patrons of this school district.”

Stinnett said she simply did not support the expenditure.

“I just felt like there wasn’t an easy choice,” she said. “A Fund 4 or lease purchase option takes the issue out of the voters’ hands. A bond issue would deplete our bonding capacity, which I think we should protect for future building projects.”

Harpst told the Board the school district received the \$1.9 million offer from the Stiles Company on Oct. 4, down from its original \$2.4 million price tag. He said it would take about 60 days to close on the deal.

The Board had three appraisals of the property, ranging from \$1.6 million to \$1.9 million. Harpst said cost estimates to reproduce the building range from \$2.9 million to \$6.4 million. The 1.7-acre parcel of land it sits on is estimated at \$450,000. He also said the estimated cost to retrofit the building for school district usage would run between \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million, depending on what the Board wanted to do with the space.

At Friday's special meeting, no decision was made on how to fund the planned improvements. Harpst said the Board could opt to package the \$400,000 and the cost of improvements together in one lease/purchase arrangement or even a future bond issue.

"That would be something the Board will discuss at future meetings," Harpst said.

H2O tops Weston agenda

Jerry Keuhn
Reporter

While nearly 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered with it, most municipalities know that water is a top necessity. No, it's not "Mad Max" (Mel Gibson played the lead character in the "Mad Max" trilogy, which was set in a futuristic time when water becomes a very precious commodity, indeed) time in Weston, but the Weston Board of Aldermen did spend much of its meeting Oct. 8 discussing water.

The meeting was opened with a presentation from Gary Webber of the Missouri Rural Water Association, who reported that his organization is developing a wellhead protection plan for the City of Weston, which has four wells it uses for water supply. Webber spoke of the importance of having an action plan in place in case of contamination, and said the plan should be completed in the next couple months.

Later in the meeting, the board discussed a possible policy change in which the City would return water deposits to citizens who have paid their water payments in good standing after a set number of years. City Clerk Kim Kirby said she was in support of returning the water deposits under set circumstances as there were people who could use the money for the deposits — \$70 for residents and \$100 for businesses — elsewhere. Alderman John Collier said he had some concerns about changing the policy, and cited a period of time a few years ago when the City "was out a ton of money because there were too many people who had stepped out on their water bill without paying it." The board took no action on the matter, but did determine to do further research and discuss it again.

The board also approved an ordinance establishing a new emergency water fund with \$100,000 received by the City of Weston as part of an agreement resolving a civil lawsuit between Kansas City Power & Light (Iatan II), the Sierra Club and the Concerned Citizens of Platte County. The ordinance states the rationale for the settlement funds is to provide the City a funding source to assist in the event of contamination of the water supply or an emergency related to the City's water supply. The ordinance also establishes that the settlement funds are not for the day-to-day cost or maintenance of the City's water supply.

And it was water once again as the board discussed the possible application for a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) grant to help make improvements at the City's water plant. Weston Water Plant Superintendent Danny Masoner had compiled a list of necessary improvements for the water plant a couple of years ago, and this list identified approximately \$2.3 million in upgrades, including a new water tower on Highway P and a flood lagoon for the water plant. Discussion was also held about DNR grant application requirements to identify other funding sources for monies needed and not supplied by the grant, which could be for up to \$500,000. Board members ultimately decided to research the grant application process more to find out if a bond issue requiring a special election would be needed and to set a plan of action.

While it wasn't water under the bridge, Thomas Street resident Carolyn Larsen approached the board about topsoil — or the lack of it — on her property near the recently rebuilt Thomas Street Bridge.

“We are thrilled to have the bridge open again, but I would like my topsoil back,” said Larsen, who had provided a construction easement. “I’ve got clay and rock now and you can’t grow much with that.” Larsen also stated concerns about the condition of the local trailer park, and the board told Larsen it would have public works superintendent Mike Large take a look at the trailer park and also see what could be done to get her topsoil replaced.

In other business, the board:

- Heard a report from Weston Chamber of Commerce President Paul Norman, who thanked everyone who helped put on the Applefest celebration last weekend. He said that official numbers should be available by the next board meeting, and that while Saturday attendance seemed to be near normal, Sunday crowds may have been down some. He also reported that sales tax revenue in September in Weston was 15 percent higher than during the same month a year ago and that for the fifth consecutive year, “Ingram’s” magazine had named Weston the best day trip in the Kansas City metropolitan area.
- Determined to allow Weston Estates builder Steve Sellars, of S&S Investments, to work on weekends and evenings at the development site despite a recommendation from Large that Sellars not be allowed to do so because inspections could not be done then. After discussion, the board approved a motion to allow Sellars to continue his work as long as he properly met critical inspection points, and Large was given the power to revoke Sellars’ right to work if the critical inspection points were not met.
- Heard from resident Ann Raab, who said she had questions about the maintenance issue on Edward Street. She suggested an area be made no parking because of potential dangers from turning at a blind spot caused by vehicles parked there, and also spoke of a large sinkhole that is developing nearby. Mayor Cindy Seward said there had been recent discussion about the conditions of streets throughout the City, and now that attention can be turned from Thomas Street Bridge construction, the City would take a look at the streets.
- Approved a motion to table the revocation of the business license for Mac’s Place to allow the owner more time to correct alleged ordinance violations, primarily the required installation of a ventilation system. Alderman Greg Hoffman said he made the recommendation to table the matter until next month’s board meeting based on his belief that the business had been negatively affected by the bridge construction and that the owner had shown good faith in meeting City requirements. City attorney Quint Shafer also said the City would supply Mac’s Place with a copy of the applicable ordinance.
- Determined to make a list of complaints given to the City and to develop a tracking system to see that the complaints are properly handled.

TDD agreement approved

Jeanette Browning
Assistant Editor

The City of Platte City will back the bonds for the construction of road improvements for the Platte Valley Plaza Transportation Development District (TDD).

The Board of Aldermen approved a cooperative agreement with Mannrose LLC, the developer of Platte Valley Plaza, and the TDD itself at its regular meeting Tuesday evening. The TDD board is expected to approve the agreement as well, probably within the week. From there, design work would begin shortly, with construction scheduled for next spring.

Attorney David Bushek, representing the City, presented the joint agreement to the board, and said he was satisfied with the established terms. Those terms include the establishment of a seven-eighths-cent sales tax within the district boundaries, and a five cent special property assessment on some properties within the district. Two series of bonds would be issued, each series to fund a different set of road improvements.

In 2005, the City entered into an agreement with Mannrose to construct road improvements in Platte Valley Plaza, located off Running Horse Road. The agreement included the addition of stoplights, turning lanes and other safety and traffic control improvements to the area. The improvements have yet to be completed, and earlier this year, along with the formation of the TDD, Mannrose agreed to complete additional road improvements, including the extension of Kentucky Avenue.

In August, Alderman Ken Brown said the TDD committee had asked the City consider backing the bonds, and after consultation with Bushek, of Gilmore and Bell, the board agreed to investigate the possibility last month.

Bushek said the financial risk to the City was minimal because the TDD was projected to collect enough funds to pay for the road improvements. However if the district fails to collect sufficient funds the City would be responsible for covering the shortfall. The City would recoup any money it may have to invest, however, as one of the terms of the agreement.

City Administrator Keith Moody said the reimbursement, plus a planned reserve fund, should cover any potential shortfall. The TDD's lifespan is set at 20 years, with an option to extend the tax an additional 20 years.

“I don't see where there is a significant risk to the City, because of the projections and the extended period of time,” he said.

Also, Moody said as the project matures the risk to the City would lessen as more sales tax-generating businesses open their doors, and more revenue overall is generated within the district. The overall site plan calls for 48 percent of businesses to generate sales tax revenue.