

CID FOES FIRE AWAY AT HEARING

Lee Stubbs
Editor

Platte City's Board of Aldermen tabled voting on the Platte City Market Center Community Improvement District Tuesday night. Before it did, though, it heard several people in the audience speak out against the CID during a public hearing on the matter.

A CID is a funding mechanism established when property owners petition for a sales tax to be imposed on their property in addition to current taxes. The Platte City Market Center proposal calls for a five-eighth cent sales tax to be imposed on a piece of property in Platte Valley Plaza targeted for a Price Chopper superstore. The tax would generate tax revenues over a 20-year period to help fund \$920,000 in infrastructure work at the store site, as well as \$750,000 in funds to help complete the extension of Kentucky Avenue west to N Highway on Platte City's south side. The issue needs only majority approval from the Board of Aldermen to take effect.

The Board decided to table the issue until its March 27 meeting so that alderman Bill Knighton, who was absent Tuesday evening, could weigh in on the matter.

During the public hearing, the board heard comments from special City counsel, David Bushek, and Jed Harrison, of Supermarket Developers, Inc. about the 50,000 square foot Price Chopper it wants to build. Then, Mike Rowland, owner/operator of Cash Saver grocery store in Platte City, opened the public comments in opposition of the City granting the CID.

Rowland said that he was a member of Associated Wholesale Grocers, a member-owned cooperative that is also involved in the new store process.

"These guys are my wholesalers, they supply me," he said. "They are working with the City, who is in essence subsidizing this project. I'm very much opposed with the City siding with and conspiring with my wholesaler. I'm livid and I felt like I had to speak my piece."

Platte City resident David Fisher also spoke out against the CID.

"We have two stores now and we don't need a third," he said. "I have a problem with us as citizens and taxpayers helping them build this. Let them build it on their own merit."

Mayor Dave Brooks pointed out that the tax would only be imposed on that piece of property and not throughout the City.

"I buy groceries and we will all have the same options," he said. "We can either shop at Mike's store or the new store. This is good for everybody."

The status of Leo's Country Mart was also discussed. As reported recently in The Citizen, Platte Woods grocer Paul Bresette has purchased Leo's from the Glick family, which has operated the store at its present location since 1976. Bresette will take over management of the store on April 10. Rumors have circulated throughout the community that Bresette will operate the Country Mart while the Price Chopper is being built, then close it and take over the new store when it is ready to open.

When asked by audience members if this was true, Harrison and Charles Renner, an attorney for Supermarket Developers/AWG, said they "did not have that information."

"We are not aware of Leo's closing down, nor of a decision being made on who will operate the new store," Harrison said.

Concerns were also voiced by Jay Roberts, representing the Estates of Platte Valley Homeowners Association. The group is worried that the development may lead to a drop in property values and present some safety issues.

"We're not against bettering our community, but we asking for some concessions in the form of retention walls or other boundary screening," he said.

Alderman Aaron Jung, who represents that area of the City, concurred.

"I have talked to my constituents and people are pretty much in favor of a larger store, but they also want to maintain their property values and nice neighborhood safety," he said.

Harrison said that Supermarket Developers was committed to "building a nice store and shopping area that would contribute to the community." Harrison also added that second phase plans for the property call for the addition of 11,000 square feet of retail space.

In related news, City Administrator Keith Moody told the Board that a Transportation Development District petition for a different area of Platte Valley Plaza had been approved by the Platte County Circuit

Court. He said that the TDD, outlined in last week's Citizen and proposed by developer Bill Mann and consisting of a one-cent tax imposed on that district, would help fund various road projects in the district area.

Thieves strip copper from park

Lee Stubbs
Editor

Last week at Platte Ridge Park, thieves made off with more than 14,000 feet of copper wire estimated to cost approximately \$40,000. But officials are amazed the wire was pulled from conduits buried in the ground and then transported undetected from the park.

"I don't know how they did it," Platte City Parks and Rec Director Dannie Stamper said. "I know they had to work their (rears) off. Whoever did it really knows what they are doing."

The Platte City Sheriff's Department believes the theft occurred sometime between March 1-7. It was reported by Platte County Parks superintendent John Carney on March 7, when he noticed that outlet boxes on the park's 24 light poles had been vandalized. When a sheriff's deputy arrived, the two men discovered that copper wiring had been stripped from conduits running from the park's concession stand electrical storeroom to the light poles.

Stamper said the thieves gained entrance to the storeroom by forcing open a sliding window entrance at the front of the concession stand. They then went to the conduit power boxes in the storeroom and began to cut the insulated copper wire. When all the wire was cut from the boxes inside, the thieves then went to each individual pole, broke into the outlet boxes at each pole, cut the wire at the pole's base and then pulled the wire from the power boxes through the conduit in the ground to each pole and out.

Stamper said it's hard to visualize how the intruders pulled off the theft.

"To start off with, I don't know how they pulled the wire out — it's pretty tight, and there's not much to get a hold of to pull it," he said. "Then, they had to haul it off. We're talking about thousands of pounds; it wouldn't fit in a pickup truck."

Stamper said the theft was even more puzzling because the gate — located hundreds of yards from many of the light poles — was still locked.

"There's no way they carried all that wire over there," he said.

The light system is monitored by an out-of-town company, which left a message on Stamper's voice mail several days ago of a system error. Stamper said when he returned the call, the company could not pinpoint the problem or even when it had detected the error message.

"I didn't think too much of the call at the time," Stamper said. "Usually that means a bulb blew out or something."

Stamper said the City was working with its insurance provider for coverage. He added that Capital Electric has assured him it can get the poles re-wired in time for the spring baseball-softball season at the park.

"At this point, it doesn't look like it will delay us," he said.

The wire theft is the second in the past two months at Platte Ridge Park. In January, much smaller amounts of wire left on spools were taken from the park's maintenance shed.

Copper wire theft has been a recurring problem in the Kansas City metro area. The sportsfield complex at the new Tiffany Hills Park has been victimized twice in recent months.

The Platte County Sheriff's Department said it is processing information taken from the crime scene; no leads had been reported as of Tuesday afternoon.

Grading work set to begin

In other Platte City Parks and Recreation news, Stamper said grading work to address some erosion problems at the park will get under way in the next few weeks. The Platte City Parks and Recreation Board of Directors approved contracting the work out to Hill Brothers at a cost of approximately \$32,000.

The grading is part of a list of problems County officials, who lease the park to the City — have said need to addressed.

Last month, City officials said the parks and rec department could borrow up to \$120,000 to help fund the improvements.

Stamper also said that concrete work at the hub of the baseball field four-plex was set to get under way in preparation for the spring ball season.

Weston drops speed limit on 45

Jerry Keuhn

Reporter

Traveling through Weston will soon require more time after an ordinance change effected by the Weston Board of Aldermen during their meeting March 12.

After a brief discussion, the board approved a motion to update Weston's basic speed law ordinance to be more inclusive and to clarify language pertaining to penalties. The change was necessitated by conversations the City has had with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) about changing the speed limits on Hwy. 45 through town.

"We've been wanting to lower the speed limits along Hwy. 45 for years and MoDOT has told us that they are willing to work with us now to get it done," Weston Mayor Howard Hellebuyck said. "MoDOT has jurisdiction on setting the speed limits and they told us we needed to make sure our ordinance was updated before they could make the changes."

Hellebuyck suggested reducing the speed limit on northbound Hwy. 45 before the location of the Floyd Liberty Companies building, then moving the 45 miles-per-hour sign back to an area before Siler Estates and finally to 35 mph before Middle Rd. The speed limit would then continue at 35 mph through town to the city limits on the north side of town past the ball fields.

The board also heard a citizen's request from Ann Raab, who said a neighbor had an unleashed pit bull in an unfenced yard nearby. Raab proposed that the City look into a ban on pit bulls in Weston.

"I know we have a vicious dog ordinance here already, but when a dog becomes vicious it's too late," she said. "Weston thrives on its public image and just one pit bull incident could really hurt that. I would like to see the City be proactive and consider a ban on pit bulls."

The board thanked Raab for her comments, but did not take any action at the time.