DCSC tables $20M building project

By Kevin Schnepp
Staff writer

Delphi Community School Corporation Board of Trustees decided Monday night to give the old adage 'time heals all wounds' a chance instead of fighting patrons in court. The board voted to table discussion regarding its proposed building renovation project until after July 1 when new state laws regarding the process become effective.

Patrons and voters filed a petition against the project's cost, estimated to be more than $20 million, almost two months ago. DCSC Superintendent Ralph Walker said attorneys for the building project provided two options for the board's consideration: Declare the petitions invalid due to inaccuracies and begin the legal process to receive project approval from the state despite opposition; or table further discussion until the board feels the public has adequately been made aware of the error and state property tax reform laws go into effect July 1.

After consideration of litigation, finances, state rules, local impact and other aspects of the issue, members voted to delay further discussion. The motion, as written in the board's version of the agenda and read verbatum by board member Jerry Sparks as suggested by corporation attorneys, stated as follows:

"Based on the materially inaccurate information contained in a petition requesting the petition-remonstrance process apply to the multi-school renovation project which was filed with the County Voter Registration Office, this Board believes that there is significant misinformation in our community regarding some or all of the parts of this project which needs to be corrected. Because of the time it may take to correct this misinformation, the Board hereby determines to table any further consideration of any or all aspects of the multi-school renovation project until such time as the Board believes such misinformation has been corrected."

"The essence is we're going to wait until the referendum process starts July 1," Resler explained.

Walker said the decision would allow the board to separate renovation projects into categories and proceed with each under a new set of resolutions in August or September. He said the building project finance group advised the board could extend a 1998 bond two years to finance some planned renovations.

Walker explained the move would generate $1.5 million through lowered interest rates.

Though no formal decision about how to spend the money was made, discussion focused on using the funds for repairs and to enhance security at the elementary schools. Board member Melinda Rossetter asked Walker if some or all of the money could be used to renovate the high school science wing. Walker said he thought there could be a way because it could be used for anything.

Patron Everett Snoeberger, who said he filed the petition based on the building project's cost, agreed repairs and security at the schools was important but maintained the board's original desire to repair key elements at the high school were important. He told the board how they choose to proceed would determine public reaction.

"We are concerned about the science wing and security issues at the high school," Snoeberger told the board. "If you remain focused on those areas, I don't think you'll receive any more resistance from the public."

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approved.

Tammy Lewellen resigned as middle school student council sponsor.

DCES teachers Susan Freeman and Lorraine Weckerly were approved for retirements after 38 and 26 years in education, respectively.

New computers were purchased for the high school. A cost was not provided at the meeting.

Resler presented outgoing board members Paul Brown and Mike Shoemaker plaques for their service. He extended a welcome to Chris Nipple and William Trueblood, who will join the board next month.

The next meeting will be July 14 at 7 p.m. in the corporation office.

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Strasser said he first met with a Swift Development Corporation representative last Friday about the project. He described the product to be produced to be "cutting edge technology for alternative aviation fuel.

He further stated the city was "not really going to be involved" in the project and there would be little or no impact to the city or county.

According to the Swift Enterprises Web site, the corporation was founded seven years ago at Purdue Research Park and is led by the Ruseks who have been involved in the field of energy for more than two decades.

According to the Indiana Secretary of State Web site, Swift Development Corporation Inc. was formed in September 2007 with articles of incorporation, which were amended the next month to reflect a change in the name to Swift Development LLC. The development corporation's address is the Delphi Municipal Airport.

Former Delphi Mayor Sam Deiwert said he planned to attend the meeting.

"I would encourage every citizen to go to the meeting to find out what the impact of this project would have for the city and county as far as tax base, quality of life and job opportunities," he said. "These types of technological industries could provide niche employment opportunities for the county in order to make it attractive to others."

"I didn't know progress was going to be as swift as I'm hearing now," city council president Carolyn Pearson said, referring to the Inside Indiana Business interview. "I think the meeting is a good idea. I want to learn too about what impact this could have on our community."

Delphi Airport manager Brian Stirm and John and Mary Rusek would not comment for this article.

SR25 restricted thru June 25

Comet staff report

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) will restrict traffic on SR25 between US421 and SR218 to one lane as directed by flag persons during daylight hours through June 25 while pavement is resurfaced.

Work schedule is subject to change in the event of inclement weather. INDOT reminds drivers to use caution and consider worker safety when traveling through a construction zone. Visit www.in.gov/indot for more information.

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