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Shelby - Utica News



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Shelby looks to vacant elementary school to solve Community Center woes

Township to host three town hall meetings to collect public input

BY SARAH WOJCIK
swojczik@candgnews.com

SHELBY TOWNSHIP — Originally pitched by a Shelby Township resident at a Utica Community Schools Board of Education meeting, the idea to use the vacant Ewell Elementary School building has been gaining momentum as a solution to the problem of the overcrowded Shelby Community Center.

The township will host three town hall

meetings to discuss the recommendation of renovating Ewell Elementary School, located near 23 Mile and Shelby roads, to house the library, senior center and Shelby cable TV. The township would expand the existing Community Center building solely for the 41-A District Court.

The first town hall meeting will take place at 7 p.m. Feb. 24 at the municipal building, located at 52700 Van Dyke Ave., south of 24

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Shelby Township is looking into utilizing the vacant building that used to house Ewell Elementary School, located near 23 Mile and Shelby roads, as a possible solution to its Community Center needs.

Photo by Erin Sanchez

Ewell

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Mile Road. The second town hall meeting will take place at 10 a.m. March 2 at the senior center, located at 51670 Van Dyke Ave., north of 23 Mile Road. The third town hall meeting will take place at 7 p.m. March 2 at the library, 51670 Van Dyke Ave.

On Sept. 1, the Board of Trustees formed a Community Center Advisory Board to evaluate the needs of the Community Center and find the best solution — the township's No. 1 priority for the last several years. The Community Center currently houses the court, library, senior center and Shelby cable TV offices.

Trustee and Community Center Advisory Board member Paula Filar said the group had several meetings to discuss the needs of the existing units in the Community Center. She said it toured and analyzed the entire building and interviewed staff from all departments.

"We determined that, with the needed renovations that were required to satisfy all of the needs of the departments located in the center, we may not be able to house everything we needed to house in the same building," Filar said. "We decided that we may need to expand the building."

Township Engineer Carol Thurber, with Fazal Khan and Associates, said the first option the Community Center Advisory Board explored was retaining the court and library in the existing building and constructing a small building elsewhere in the township for the senior center and Shelby cable TV.

The next option, Thurber said, was to relocate some or all of the other departments besides the court to an existing building and repurpose that building for the township's needs.

"After searching, our recommendation is to relocate the senior center, library and cable TV to the vacant Ewell Elementary School," Thurber said. "The repurposing of the existing Ewell Elementary building will allow the needed



Photo by Erin Sanchez

One idea to help the cramped Shelby Community Center is to move the library, senior center and Shelby TV offices into the vacant building that used to house Ewell Elementary School. The township will host town hall meetings on the topic Feb. 24 and March 2.

41-A (District) Court expansion, which is required according to the agreement between the township and the court."

Trustee and Community Center Advisory Board member Doug Wozniak said the township would host the town hall meetings to discuss all the options, consider

the recommendation and gather input from the users of the Community Center.

"If you can't get (to a town hall meeting), you're always allowed to make your comments to anyone on the board, and we'll take those and forward them to the (right) people so we can have those recommenda-

tions all together," Wozniak said. "We want a lot of input on this, so that's why we're opening it up. Anyone can participate."

After the town hall meetings, Wozniak said, the Community Center Advisory Board will review all of the input, develop a final recommendation, and pres-

ent it to the Board of Trustees in a work session. He said the item will be discussed at the April 19 board meeting.

Supervisor Rick Stathakis said he was glad to see a partial plan in terms of addressing the Community Center needs.

"We did have some safety concerns surrounding the seniors and library patrons who were forced to use the facility that experiences daily prisoner transfers," Stathakis said. "I hope to send the message throughout the community that you don't always have to build a new building. You can have a great building without building a new one."

Bill Mason, the Shelby Township resident who first broached the idea of utilizing the vacant

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