



## Shelby approves 'modest' court construction

BY SARAH WOJCIK  
swojck@candnews.com

**SHELBY TOWNSHIP** — On Nov. 15, the Shelby Township Board of Trustees voted 6-1 to authorize the design and construction of a 15,000- to 17,000-square-foot district court building next to the Shelby Township Police Department in the township municipal complex, at a cost not to exceed \$4.5 million.

### Board caps total court costs at \$4.5 million

During the past 15 years, the township has considered different ideas about how to address the cramped, aging 41-A District Court in Shelby Township, which currently shares a building with the library, senior center and Shelby TV.

The township discussed relocating the court to another community, but none of the potential communities — in-

cluding Utica, Sterling Heights and Macomb Township — ultimately warmed to the idea of paying for it.

The township also considered renovating the current building for the court, as well as moving the library and senior center to the former Ewell Elementary School building, located at 23 Mile and Shelby roads. The estimated cost of renovating the school — approximately \$8 million — closed that door.

See COURT on page 4A

## Court

from page 1A

"I wasn't sure if this was going to happen in my lifetime," Supervisor Rick Stathakis said. "We can't be accused of not thoroughly examining all the potential alternatives."

Once the design is completed by Anderson, Eckstein & Westrick, the board will seek bids to construct the new court. The \$4.5 million price tag includes all things pertaining to the court, including necessary site improvements.

"I appreciate the efforts by so many people to help us get to this solution," Stathakis said. "Besides residents, we have heard from financial and engineering experts to help determine the best path forward."

Carol Thurber, of township engineering firm Fazal Khan & Associates, said the water table at the proposed site prevents a basement, and the modest building would have the potential for future

expansion.

Thurber said the township could not use plans prepared before the 2008 township election, which established a new Board of Trustees, for a 90,000-square-foot, \$23 million "justice center" that would house the court and Police Department.

"From what I understand,

that was a three-story building, which had a basement, and things were spread out in a different configuration," Thurber said. "We now have to have everything — that includes probate, holding cells, two courtrooms, offices — all within that 15,000 square feet instead of spread out over three floors."

Shelby Township will fund the court without bonds, loans or new costs to the taxpayers, Stathakis said.

Financial consultant John Kaczor, of Municipal Analytics, said the township already had money set aside for a solution to the court and Shelby Community Center needs. The court, he said,

also has been collecting a special fine for several years for court building needs.

"(The fines collect) about \$140,000-\$160,000 a year," Kaczor said in a prior interview. "That money would be used to repay the township's capital improvement fund for the cost of the building."

See COURT on page 17A

## Court

from page 4A

In the long term, the cost of the court will be borne by the court and those who use it."

The second phase of the decision to build a new court is to renovate the existing Community Center. Kaczor said the township will have time to work with the community to formulate a plan for the remaining occupants of the Community Center while the new court is built.

Trustee Doug Wozniak, who sits on the Community Center Advisory Board, said the committee reviewed plans and schematics of other courts, brought in 41-A District Court Judge Doug Shepherd and discussed what the new building would need.

"We think we have a good

schematic," Wozniak said. "When it's done, we're going to tweak it again as Judge Shepherd needs it and we all agree on, but it's going to be under \$4.5 million."

Treasurer Michael Flynn said he is glad the township balanced its general, fire and police budgets before addressing the court and that he thinks building a \$4.5 million court, as opposed to previously proposed options, is a responsible way to spend money.

"I believe the construction of a court building is long overdue, and I'm happy to see it reach fruition," Trustee Paul Vlar said.

The Shelby Township municipal complex is located at 52700 Van Dyke Ave., south of 24 Mile Road. For more information, call the Supervisor's Office at (586) 731-5151.

Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.



Shelby Township voted to construct a new building for the 41-A District Court, which is currently housed in the Shelby Community Center. The second phase of the project will be to renovate the existing building, which also houses the library, senior center and Shelby TV.

File photo provided by Brad Bates