



CITY OF DECATUR ILLINOIS

#1 GARY K. ANDERSON PLAZA

DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62523-1196

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 17, 2022

City Council begins major sewer project, approves Wi-Fi for buses, home rehab program with Habitat, and sale of Fire Station #3

Decatur, IL – Highlights from the October 17, 2022 Decatur City Council meeting include a major sewer infrastructure project, an approval of Wi-Fi for Transit buses, an agreement with Habitat for Humanity for a home rehab program, and the sale of former Fire Station #3.

Oakland and Grand Sewer Separation Project

The Decatur City Council on Monday approved an agreement with AECOM Technical Services, Inc. for final design services for the Oakland and Grand Area Sewer Separation Project. This area was identified by the City as high-priority due to its long history of wet weather basement backups. The predominant cause of basement backups in the area is the combined sewers where both sanitary sewage and storm water are carried in the same pipe.

Council had some discussion about the best option to proceed with and directed City staff to work with AECOM to identify the most cost-effective and practical way to move forward. The project will include the full separation of the storm water system from the sewer system. It will be one of the largest sewer projects in recent Decatur history. The City anticipates using an IEPA low-interest loan program for funding this project, along with Sanitary Sewer funds and ARP monies.

Wi-Fi for buses

Also on Monday night, the City Council approved the purchase of Wi-Fi equipment for Decatur Public Transit System (DPTS) buses. Not only will residents – including DPS-61 high school students – have access to free internet while on City buses, but this also supports future technological improvements. DPTS has plans to add an electronic fare system, make ADA improvements, and introduce real-time bus location services in the near future.

The entire Transit fleet will receive this equipment and support Wi-Fi. This purchase is being funded by federal grants.

Home Rehab program with Habitat for Humanity

More homes in the City of Decatur will be rehabilitated thanks to an agreement between the City and Decatur Area Habitat for Humanity (DAH4H). The Council approved up to \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) monies to be used by DAH4H to rehab vacant properties in Decatur to add higher-quality housing stock.

The City will provide homes and funding and DAH4H will manage the rehabilitation. It will be a community effort as DAH4H plans to involve high school trades students, Workforce Investment Solutions, Trades & Labor Council, and local contractors to complete this work. The houses will likely be used as classrooms for students and pre-apprenticeship program participants, providing hands-on experience as well as a new marketable skill.

Upon successful completion of a home rehab, DAH4H will seek out first-time home buyers for these houses, as they have been doing for 35 years. This program is similar to other community-City partnerships and runs parallel with other residential rehab programs using ARP funds.

Sale of former Fire Station #3

The City Council approved the sale of former Fire Station #3 to a local business owner who plans to convert the building into residential apartments. The new owner, Mark Allen of Lindy Lu LLC, indicated he would build an addition to the current facility and add residential apartments. Mr. Allen estimated his investment would be \$750,000+ to complete this project.

This is the second round of proposals the City solicited. Last year, Council approved the sale to a corn hole business, but that deal fell through due to the buyer's financing challenges. The sale proceeds of \$115,000 will be used to cover construction costs of the new Fire Station #7 currently being completed.

Other business

In other business, the City Council spent time providing initial direction on what should be done with the City's portion of the tax levy for 2023. The discussion only served to assist as City staff continues the budget process and was not an action item. More discussion on the tax levy will occur during budget considerations next month.

Additionally, the Council authorized a second cost-sharing agreement with a local landowner as part of the Lake Decatur Watershed Protection Program. This project will help reduce sediment and nitrates from entering Lake Decatur. Many more similar projects will be on future agendas as the Council continues to assure good water quality and proper watershed stewardship for the future.

More information about these topics can be found in the City Council Agenda packet, downloadable/viewable here: www.decaturil.gov/mayor-and-council/council-meetings/

###