



CITY OF DECATUR ILLINOIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Decatur City Council invests in childcare with approval of former Wee Folks building rehabilitation

Decatur, IL – On Monday night the Decatur City Council approved an investment of COVID funds to help create much-needed childcare openings. Approximately \$730,000 in Community Development Block Grant-Covid (CDBG-CV) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds will be used to rehabilitate the former Wee Folks building at 1170 Orchard Street. Once the rehab is complete and up to DCFS childcare standards, a private childcare operator plans to open and immediately offer 250 childcare openings, with plans to expand to a 24-hour facility with three shifts of 250 childcare openings per shift.

The former Wee Folks facility closed during the pandemic and left a significant gap in childcare availability in the urban core. Love Learning and Laughter Daycare is a minority-owned childcare business that will move into the facility. Several community members spoke in favor of the business and owner Cherri Johnson including a client, the Decatur NAACP chapter, Macon County CASA, Shemilah Outreach Center, Birth to Five, Dove, Inc., Northeast Community Fund, Workforce Investment Solutions, Heart of Illinois Community Foundation, Richland Community College's Enrich program, and several others. Council members agreed that renovating this facility is critical to their workforce development goals. The renovation also aligns with the City's Jasper Street Great Streets Great Neighborhoods initiative as it is located along Jasper Street next to the Boys & Girls Club of Decatur and Hope Academy.

Contracts approved Monday were for: asbestos abatement, painting, flooring installation, installation of fire suppression sprinkler system, and installation of a new HVAC unit.

Other business

In other business...GFL Environmental publicly apologized for poor performance in June. A representative explained that they had compounding issues after choosing to change service days for Decatur residents. They believe that they have things back on track and have brought in outside employees and equipment to ensure proper service.

Finally, Council approved a series of vacations of Rights-of-Way to support the Tillamook campus. This action essentially removes ownership of certain roads around the ice cream plant, meaning they will no longer be public roads. Tillamook is rehabilitating the former Prairie Farms Ice Cream plant and has a larger vision to revitalize the area around the plant. They plan to fence in their entire campus, so moving forward they will maintain the vacated roads. Tillamook is currently hiring and on track for ice cream production to begin in November 2024.

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

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