

Barga, Friedman bringing OSFC into the mix on former GHS

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Judge Russ Wiseman, Steven Friedman and John Barga continued negotiations for the purchase of the old Galion high school building last Friday during a phone conference.

"They [the reuse group] are still working with the security [for future demolition]," said Friedman, counsel for the Galion board of education. "They are working on different ideas that have potential."

"Barga has called the OSFC [Ohio School Facilities Commission], as have I," said Friedman, "to see if the OSFC could assist to see the guarantee a reality." Essentially money from the building project would be set aside for the guarantee.

"We had a good discussion with the judge," said Barga, counsel for the plaintiffs. "We are working on some new ideas to try to save the high school."

Basically, the idea, presented to the OSFC is that the 76 percent state share of the demolition of the high school would be held in an escrow account until the project either failed or was successful. If the reuse project failed, the money would be there to demolish the old high school. If the project was successful, the money would be released back to the state.

On Jan. 14, 2008, a group of citizens filed legal action against the Galion Board of Education, asking the court to stop the demolition of the old Galion High School. An agreement between the two sides was reached to complete the abatement with a view to remodel. The first hearing of the case was scheduled for Feb. 19. That hearing was continued until March 5.

During negotiations between lawyers, defendants, plaintiffs, and the judge on March 5, an agreement was made to run the preliminary injunction request hearing

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and hearing on the merits together. April 3 and 4 were then set aside for the case. The hearing was postponed, and claims one and four of the plaintiffs request were dismissed. The remaining portions of the case dealing with open meetings and open records laws would have been heard in front of a jury by order of Judge Russ Wiseman May 20, but has been moved to July 8 begin-

ning at 8 a.m. and July 9 beginning at 9 a.m.

A rally was held May 15 to garner support for saving the historic building. Apart from the pending lawsuit, negotiations for the old high school building continue. The demands from the board include \$100,000 cash for the old high school building, \$800,000 in security for future demolition should the reuse project fail and an occupancy permit within three years of the sale.