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Old Galion High School — A tale of two proposals

Plan proposed to the Galion board of education
By RACHEL MENDALL, Inquirer Reporter
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A security in unannounced real estate that actually exceeds the cost of demolition if the group is unable to secure the building, we think

Education Board) to allow the Board's time and make its committee level to a point where it is satisfied that the former Galion High School if not

Board offers to sell building for \$100,000
By RACHEL MENDALL, Inquirer Reporter
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We don't want it (the old high school) sitting there as a white elephant." The board is asking that

"The purchase agreement also will acknowledge that the property is sold "as-is"

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Plan proposed to the Galion board of education

By **RACHEL MENDELL**

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"The adaptive reuse committee has worked very hard to come up with a proposal," said Steven Kemle, plaintiff in the lawsuit against the Galion board of education. "I feel very confident. I feel very comfortable with what the judge [Judge Russ Wiseman] has requested of the group."

The former Galion High School Adaptive Re-Use Committee submitted a security structure to the Galion Board of Education Wednesday. The re-use group has worked in tandem with the plaintiffs who filed legal action against the board of education in hopes of saving the old Galion High School building back in January.

"The group did this because they understood the board's concerns," said Thomas Palmer, a member of the reuse group. "We believe those concerns can be met through the security structure. The project is just as viable today as it always has been."

The signature sheet included in the security structure was signed by Steven Kemle, Carole Kemle, David Smith, Martha Palmer, Marty Cecil, Dan Derfler and Missy Harris.

The security structure given to the board of education for review yesterday includes, most importantly, according to Palmer, "security in case we are not able to get up and running in seven years."

The security structure includes:

- a security in unencumbered real estate that actually exceeds the cost of demolition if the group is unable to meet the benchmarks set forth in the structure

- an assurance that the old high school will not be involved in theatre production.

- a preservation easement that will be put in place which will watch over the project to make sure it is in line with historic preservation requirements

- the cooperation of Steven McQuillin and Associates as consultants

- the invitation for the board to be involved in the project including representation at every single meeting and yearly reports in the form of transparent financial documents

Also included in the documentation supplied to the board is a copy of the deed of the unencumbered property, detailed information of Steven McQuillin and his experience in preserving historic buildings (along with his successful tax credit projects), an example of a grant of easement/covenant/restriction document and detailed itemization of the covenant.

"Adaptive reuse of the former Galion High School would be of great benefit to all citizens of Galion," said plaintiff Dave Smith, "and would be a huge progressive step. Reuse of the building win also save local tax payers \$400,000."

The reuse group explained to the board in their cover letter: "We are submitting a Security Structure to the Galion City Schools Board of

Education (Board) to allay the Board's fears and raise its comfort level to a point where it is satisfied that the former Galion High School, if not property maintained, will be demolished rather than remaining a vacant distraction from the over all beauty and continuity of the entire Galion community. Our group is prepared to move forward and will provide a physical facility that will offer services to community organizations, public and private, religious groups and other persons as their needs arise. We see the adaptive reuse of the former Galion High School as a significant contribution to the history, culture, heritage, social and financial well being of our proud city."

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, which was then continued to April 3. The board requested a business plan and demolition security from anyone interested in purchasing the old high school building.

The hearing scheduled to begin April 3, was postponed, and claims one and four of the plaintiffs request were dismissed. The remaining portions of the case will be heard in front of a jury by order of Judge Russ Wiseman May 20 at 8 a.m.

Board offers to sell building for \$100,000

By **RACHEL MENDELL**
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The Galion Board of Education, via its lawyer Steven Friedman, sent an offer to John Barga and the plaintiffs Wednesday — a statement revising the original requested business plan and security for anyone wishing to purchase and use the old Galion High School.

In the statement, Friedman extended an offer to sell the old high school building to the reuse committee for \$100,000. Stipulations of the deal offered include payment of property taxes, freedom of the property from any liens, a requirement of active and productive use of 75 percent of the building for 35 hours per week. The active and productive use cannot include storage of items artistic or historical. The purchase agreement includes an "as is" clause.

"These things have all been discussed in the past," said Friedman. "Specifically this is what we are asking for.

We don't want it [the old high school] sitting there as a white elephant."

The board is asking that within three years of date of sale the buyer must obtain an occupancy permit. All property taxes must be paid and the property must be free from any liens.

The board also asks that within five years of date of sale the property must be in active and productive use as a cultural and conference center. The board is requiring 75 percent of the usable space in the building shall be used and occupied for a minimum of 35 hours per week for purposes related to the cultural and conference center.

Also, the board asked that "active and productive use shall not include storage of any items, regardless of the artist or historical value of the items stored."

Also the offer states "the buyer will agree to provide a guarantee and security in the amount of \$800,000 in order to fund the demolition of the building if the covenants are not met and the property

reverts back to the board."

The purchase agreement also will acknowledge that the property is sold "as is" and that the board is making no representations or warranties of any kind regarding the condition of the property.

"This is a general outline," said Friedman. "The details can be worked out." If they can come up with security, it will go back to the board for consideration of the demolition decision. Then they will implement procedures for sale.

The Galion board of education "remains willing to reconsider its Oct. 11, 2007 resolution .to demolish the old Galion High School if the purchaser can guarantee the building will be properly demolished if the they are unable to bring the building back to active and productive use.

"This has nothing to do with the lawsuit," said Friedman.

A detailed list of requirements may be obtained from the Galion Board of Education.