

County's borrowing list totals \$6.9 million

Written by SARAH McCRAW

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Board pares potential improvements to 10 projects for bonding resolution that will be considered June 5

An Ozaukee County Board that has been reluctant to assume debt settled last week on a \$6.9 million list of projects that it will consider borrowing money for.

The board debated 14 projects that were categorized and prioritized during a long review process, rejecting four of them and earmarking the remaining 10 for inclusion in a bonding resolution that is expected to be considered June 5.

Three construction projects — a \$1 million maintenance facility at Mee-Kwon Golf Course, a \$1 million storage building at the Justice Center and \$150,000 bathroom facility at Lions Den Gorge Nature Preserve — were turned down.

It's unclear whether the board voted to include a \$600,000 contribution toward the purchase of former VK Development land in the City of Port Washington that conservation groups want to protect as a county-owned nature preserve. The majority of the board — 15 supervisors — voted in favor of the contribution, but there's debate within the county about whether a simple majority or a super major of 20 supervisors was needed to include the proposal in the bonding resolution. (See related story on page 1B in this week's Ozaukee Press.)

County Board Chairman Lee Schlenvogt said the projects not approved for bonding could still be completed without receiving loan money from the county.

More than \$5 million of the proposed bonding would cover six projects categorized as essential maintenance — \$650,000 to replace elevators at the Administration Center, installing a \$300,000 camera system at the county jail, \$150,000 for pressure cleaning of the Administration Center, \$225,000 technology improvements at the Justice Center, a \$225,000 server space upgrade for the county and \$3.46 million for a variety of deferred road projects.

Supervisors voted unanimously to include \$550,000 for a new communications tower at the southwest corner of the Justice Center.

Supr. Nancy Szatkowski, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, said the project is needed to improve radio communications for police and fire departments throughout the county.

If the old tower were to overload or shut down due to inclement weather, it could compromise the safety of county residents, she said.

Szatkowski said the current tower could also be leased to a phone company for cell phone operations, which would help pay for the new tower.

"We'd get \$24,000 to \$28,000 a year from Sprint to put their dishes on our tower," she said. "We would have not only a revenue stream, but also money to cover the ongoing operational

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costs for the new tower.”

The board voted 21-3 to approve \$600,000 for the construction of a sheep and goat barn that would include a storage facility and showers at the Ozaukee County fair grounds.

Richard Carlson, Ozaukee County Fair Board member, said the building would replace a maintenance facility that was torn down to make room for the \$3.8 million Columbia St. Mary's Center multi-purpose building completed last fall.

Supr. Kathlyn Geracie said having showers on the fairgrounds would be an amenity that would help market the facility to groups for rental use throughout the year.

“It's really important that the facility is built, not just for 4-H, not just for the fair, but for all our citizens,” Geracie said.

A bonding request for \$500,000 to improve the heating and ventilation system at the Administration Center was also included after a 20-4 vote.

The request to include \$225,000, or half of the money sought for bathrooms to be constructed at Pioneer Village in the Town of Saukville also passed 22-2.

Supr. Gus “Sandy” Wirth said the county will not have to pay to maintain the bathrooms because that will be done by the Ozaukee County Historical Society, which operates the village.

County Administrator Tom Meaux said borrowing \$6.9 million would add 6 cents per \$1,000 of equalized value to the county tax rate, which would increase the tax bill for a \$200,000 home by about \$12 annually.

The board will vote on the borrowing on June 5.