



CITY OF DECATUR ILLINOIS

#1 GARY K. ANDERSON PLAZA

DECATUR, ILLINOIS 62523-1196

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Council approves demo of former Durfee & Coppenbarger schools, agrees to South Water Treatment Plant updates

Decatur, IL – Highlights from the April 15, 2024 Decatur City Council meeting include the approval to demolish two dilapidated former school buildings, and a financing agreement to support upgrades at the South Water Treatment Plant.

Demolition of Durfee, Coppenbarger buildings

On Monday night the Decatur City Council discussed how the City can hold property owners accountable for maintaining their buildings, and ultimately approved the demolition of two dilapidated former Decatur schools. The former Durfee school on Grand Ave & Jasper St. and the former Centennial/Coppenbarger school on E Condit St. & Woodford St. are in serious disrepair and were approved for demolition.

City staff described the state of the buildings as large public hazards and dangerous nuisances, and photos shown of the current conditions confirmed. Neither school has owners with the assets or other financial means to pay for rehabilitation or demolition of these buildings, so the Council acted to take care of these public nuisances. The cost of demolition is approximately \$1.68 million. The demolitions were bid out together, leading to a price below the City's estimate. Although the Council was reluctant to spend this much on demolition, they recognized the benefit of having these buildings come down at the same time for a reduced price.

The \$1.68 million will be paid from a City special projects reserve or from a combination of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds and special projects reserve. Waiting to demolish one building or both buildings at a later time would have likely led to a much higher fee as dump fees and environmental remediation costs continue to rise.

The demolition discussion was part of a larger conversation about how the City can avoid being put in this situation in the future. Council already passed an At-Risk Property Registration Ordinance in February 2024, but members discussed ways to be even more proactive.

Bond issuance supports water system infrastructure improvements

Council also made some financing decisions to help fund upgrades to the South Water Treatment Plant's (SWTP) chemical feed system and to the bulk water dispensing station. The City can now issue up to \$36.8 million in general obligation bonds. This refinancing move will save the City between \$1.2 million and \$1.8 million in interest, and will also provide \$5.38 million in new money for necessary water infrastructure upgrades.

Henson Robinson Company, Inc. was approved to replace the chemical feed system which dates back to 1988 when the water plant was originally built. The new feed system will be more cost-effective and efficient, allowing the City to continue providing high-quality water for decades into the future.

Additionally, the City's [bulk water dispensing station](#) will receive updates to replace outdated technology. The dispensing station, located near the north side of the dam, provides access for large water users to fill tanks on a pay-per-gallon basis. The current equipment is also from 1988. An upgraded system will allow for acceptance of credit card payments (currently only accepts quarters).

Other business

In other business... Council approved \$1.69 million for administration of six programs within the Lake Decatur watershed. This is part of the [City's Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) and will help landowners reduce sediment and nitrates from entering Lake Decatur.

Finally, Council authorized an agreement with G&H Marine Services to operate and maintain the Nelson Park fuel system. In addition to operating a newly-built marina convenience store on the west side of the City's Lake Office, G&H will manage retail boat gas sales. They were also approved to build a new dock system for the Lake Patrol boats.

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

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