



The former Three Springs facility is located in Madison on Browns Ferry Road.

City council green-lights \$11 million bid to turn old Three Springs complex into community center



By John Few

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By Maria Rakoczy

MADISON – Madison leaders gave the green light to a long-anticipated project, turning the old Three Springs juvenile detention center into a multi-purpose community center. During a special city council session on Monday night, the council approved a \$11,205,460 bid from Lee Builders to renovate the current facility.

Before the city bought the complex in 2020, the Three Springs facility on Brownsferry Road had been a troubling presence in Madison due to multiple escapes of juveniles housed in the detention center. It had been operated by Sequel TSI, but in 2019, the Madison City Council revoked its business license after a series of high-profile escapes, including one tied to a homicide in 2017.

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The resolution was initially presented by Finley for a vote on Nov. 28 but was deferred for further discussion to a subsequent work session last Wednesday. Discussion also continued Monday at the special session over the opportunity cost of this project with councilmembers Teddy Powell, Connie Spears, and Karen Denzine questioning the priority of the community center over other improvement projects.

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"I understand there is always uncertainty. It seems that at this point, there is a lot of uncertainty based on the economics of development, based on the economy in general," Denzine stated on weighing the monetary impact of the project. "I am just trying to be very fiscally responsible to the voters at this point."

Finley, however, proudly reported that surveys taken by the city indicate high demand and anticipated use of community center resources.

"Eighty-five percent of folks who answered the surveyed said they would be using a community center facility while only fifteen percent said that they would not," he said. "In talking about what adult classes they want, they are looking for arts, crafts, drawing, painting, more exercise classes, pottery and ceramics, wood crafting, gardening and horticulture. When we asked about indoor amenities, it was fitness equipment, a café, lounges for a game room, ping pong, pool, art studios, wood workshop and gym games."

He also reported that the public was looking for the outdoor amenities of a garden, entertainment center, pool, volleyball courts and splash pad.

A representative from Lee Builders, the contractor for the project, presented their plans for the community center that would, first, include a facelift to the building, additional entrances to the building, a more open-concept lobby, and a new, detached structure on campus.

According to the contractor's current plans, the community center will offer Madison citizens a gaming room, senior center, cafeteria, garden area, seven multi-purpose rooms, two ceramics rooms, a sewing room, an art room, a music room, a special needs room, a fitness center, and more.

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center programs while providing culturally enriching resources for the entire Madison community. It is also expected to include space for community non-profit organizations like the Madison post of the American Legion.

The current senior center beside Discovery Middle School on Hughes Road will be repurposed. The city is exploring utilizing that facility as overflow school district offices.

The project’s \$11 million price tag is expected to be paid off over a period of several years with funds provided by the state, donations, potential grants, and fundraising efforts led by Madison Visionary Partners (MVP).

The community center is in District 1, which is represented by council member Maura Wroblewski. She expressed her enthusiasm for the project. “I’m thrilled that we’re taking a facility that had a lot of negative connotations in our community and turning it into something that will benefit all our citizens,” she said. “I’m very excited about this project. It’ll benefit generations to come.”

Road improvements to the area around the new facility have not yet been factored in but are being considered. There are plans to improve the current parking situation by adding a dozen new parking spaces and constructing areas for bus pick-up and drop-off.

The bid from Lee was approved with a split vote. Councilman Powell voted against it and Councilman Greg Shaw was absent from the meeting. John Seifert, Spears, Dezine, and Ranae Bartlett voted for it.

The project is expected to take 18 months to complete.

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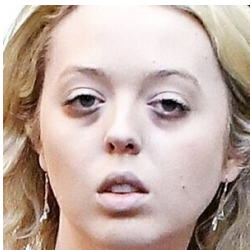
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