

Homewood selects locations for water tower site, redevelopment

BY ERIC CRUMP

ewcrump@hfchronicle.com

Homewood trustees voted April 26 to authorize Mayor Richard Hofeld to enter into a contract with the owner of two downtown buildings, 17900 Dixie Highway and 2066 Ridge Road. Prior to the vote, the measure was questioned by two residents.

The purchase price is \$1.16 million — \$505,000 for the Ridge Road property and \$655,000 for the Dixie Highway property. The Ridge Road building will be paid for from the general fund, and the Dixie Highway building will be paid for from the water fund because the village plans to use it as the site of a new water tower.

The Dixie Highway property was Homewood's second public library building and served in that capacity from 1962 to 1990, when the current library building was completed. The Ridge Road property is a white-clad building at the corner of Ridge and Harwood.

The proposal to put a water tower at the prominent location was called into question by residents Dave and Yoka Ward.



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

Homewood purchased this building at the corner of Ridge Road and Harwood Avenue.



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

Homewood has designated this site at 17900 Dixie Highway for its new water tower.

"Why would we want to put a water tower in such a prominent location in the village?" Dave said, noting

the industrial look most water towers have.

He and his spouse, Yoka, who is a

trustee on the Homewood Public Library Board, also wondered why the village would be willing to remove the property from the real estate tax rolls.

Hofeld indicated he was sympathetic to their concerns.

"Those were the questions I had when this first came up," he said.

Public Works Director John Schaefer said the old tower behind village hall, which was built in 1935, needs to be replaced.

"It needs a lot of work. The estimated work we need to have done just to have it painted is \$800,000 alone," he said.

Schaefer said the village looked at several possible sites but didn't have much flexibility in choosing a site. The new tower has to be located within a few blocks of the current tower in order to maintain balance in the water distribution system and deliver consistent water pressure to residents.

The village hopes to attract a developer to convert the Ridge Road site into a mixed-used commercial property that will contribute to the village's transit-oriented development plan.

Homewood finishes 2-week experimental 183rd traffic study

BY ERIC CRUMP

ewcrump@hfchronicle.com

A two-week experiment that reduced traffic lanes on a portion of 183rd Street has given Homewood officials information to help them decide next steps toward safety on the major thoroughfare.

Between May 16 and May 27, lines of orange traffic control barrels from just east of Riegel Road to east of Aberdeen Street reduced the four-lane highway to two lanes with a center turn lane. The experiment is what's known as a traffic diet.

If the test is considered successful, the village could restripe the street for the re-configuration to two traffic lanes, a center turn lane and bike lanes on each side.

The village also monitored traffic numbers on Ridge Road and 187th Street to determine if the traffic diet had an effect on those other major roadways in town.

Public Works Director John Schaefer said the first week of the test lane config-

uration seemed to go well. Crews made a few adjustments, including making turn lanes near James Hart School. Early on the school zone was a main point of congestion during pick-up and drop-off periods.

Schaefer said it was too early to come to any conclusions. Final traffic counts and resident feedback will help fill out the results.

Village Manager Napoleon Haney said the data would be compiled by engineers with Public Works. Village officials will meet with 183rd Street residents to share the information, get feedback and discuss options. He said a final report would take some time to complete.

"We want to do this right," he said.

The test was part of a larger project to reduce speeding and make 183rd Street safer for residents, cyclists, pedestrians and motorists.

The traffic diet approach is one of several options the village is exploring.



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

Barrels were placed on a portion of 183rd Street for two weeks as the village of Homewood tested a new lane configuration reducing traffic from four lanes to two.

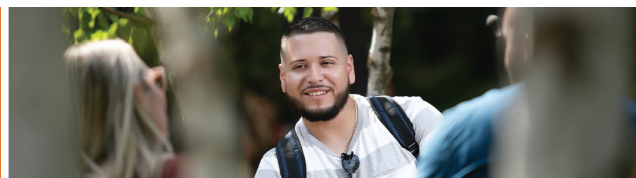
Public Works hosted two meetings with residents in April to inform them about details of the plan and get feedback which was generally positive.

"They are just glad we're doing something, that we're trying," Schaefer said. That seemed to be the sentiment on social media. While some drivers were upset by the change, many thought the trial was a

worthwhile effort.

When the plan was unveiled at the March 22 village board meeting, many residents who spoke or submitted written comments supported not only restructuring the lanes in the test stretch but extending it the length of 183rd Street from the village's eastern border at Halsted Street west to Kedzie Avenue.

**UNDERGRADUATE
OPEN HOUSE
SATURDAY, JUNE 18**



**Governors State
UNIVERSITY**