
Siting for East Aurora firehouse sparks debate

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A plan for a new firehouse in East Aurora sparked debate this week as village officials discussed the preferred site on Whaley Avenue off Main Street.

Rochester-based Bergmann Associates is still working on a needs assessment for the planned 40,000-square-foot firehouse, which would replace the 1954 firehouse that is on Oakwood Avenue.

Some village trustees Monday favored doing appraisals at both the Oakwood site and the 3.4-acre site eyed for a new firehouse on Whaley. But others, mainly Trustee Randy West, questioned the need to do anything yet since the property has not been purchased by the village and may not end up being the chosen site.

West, who has previously expressed opposition to the Whaley site and instead favored Olean Road, said he did not want to see the village locked into the Whaley site. He also questioned the need to do a property survey, as well, on the Whaley site since the village has not bought it.

“All I’m worried about is that before we get questions answered, will it be a done deal and the village could be locked into that site?” West asked. “I don’t want to back ourselves into a corner on that site. I want to find out what we’re buying. I’m not trying to stop the project — but I want to make sure we’ve explored all the options.”

Much of the property eyed by the Fire Department for its new home is owned by DelTora LLC, whose president is Paul J. Bandrowski, a champion of new development along Main Street several years ago as part of what was known as the Aurora Venture development group. Part of the Whaley site is a brownfield and includes the former Jackson Bowling Lanes and an old Agway operation.

The location of a new firehouse just off Main across from Village Hall is a critical issue facing the Village Board because when it was first announced last September, some envisioned it as multipurpose. Whaley and Paine avenues could be realigned, and the nearby library could expand just to the east of its existing facility. And the old fire station could be turned into senior citizen housing.

A new firehouse has been on the drawing board for eight years. The village recently allocated \$400,000 to create a reserve fund to jump-start the plans; the project also would require substantial bonding.

Village officials Monday ended up voting for appraisals to be done at the old firehouse and the preferred new site for a total of \$1,425. The board decided against doing a property survey on the Whaley site since village officials were told that the information should be available from Bandrowski.

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