

# The Bandera PROPHEET

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Bandera EDC considers land offers, Christmas lights and later meeting time

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The Bandera Prophet

Bandera Economic Development Corporation members have received three offers to purchase property on Buck Creek Road. The BEDC bought the land in 2017 for \$374,170 as an investment property, and the area is considered prime real estate in today's market.

The proposals were received by Art Crawford for the Silver Sage; Bandera Fire and Rescue; and Johnny Boyle, Pat Boyle and Guillot Realty.

Speaking as a city resident and business owner, Jane Russe said last week the property needs to get back on the tax rolls to protect citizens from higher taxes. The city is facing a multi-million dollar wastewater improvement project, as well as rising infrastructure costs.

Crawford proposed purchasing the land for \$400,000, with \$4,000 in earnest payment and the rest financed. His plans include small homes for tenants aged 50 and above, a corner food bank, and potentially two- to three-story residential lofts with businesses on the bottom. The Silver Sage would own everything, Crawford said, and the rental income would sustain it for many years to come. He added the businesses would not be part of the Silver Sage's 501c3 non-profit designation, and would be taxable property.

Bandera Deputy Marshal Willie Smith, speaking on behalf of Bandera Fire and Rescue, said he felt citizens would be better served by a fire station, on two of the six available acres, that could protect an increasing population and taller buildings.

“We are going to grow... whether tiny houses or businesses or what we have now,” Smith said. “If the Best Western catches on fire, the closest ladder truck is at Medina Lake. We can’t house one right now. The property on that corner would be the perfect location.”

Smith added if the fire department would ever cease to exist, the land would automatically revert back to the EDC.

“We’re not asking for a hand out, we’re asking for a hand up,” Smith said. “These two acres would do more for our department than you could ever imagine... this is about an investment in the community.”

The third proposal, by Johnny and Pat Boyle, and Guillot Realty, for \$450,000 in full, is to develop the land as mixed use - residential and commercial.

“This town lives on sales tax revenue and commercial property values,” Johnny Boyle said. “We’re not encouraging people to stay inside the city. We are bleeding and it will not stop until we allow some development. We have to find a way for people to stay and build businesses that equate to jobs.”

Boyle said 25 percent of the land within the city limits is not taxed. It all falls back on residents and businesses that pay property taxes, he said.

“If we don’t expand that, we’ll run into a dead end in a few years,”

Boyle said, who envisions residences, medical offices and retail for the area he called prime commercial land. “There is enough real estate there to build a really good asset for the city. That’s what people want.”

A workshop to further deliberate the proposals is set for Thursday, Oct. 7.

\* In other business, BEDC members approved the allocation of \$25,000 to the city for a matching Texas Parks and Wildlife Development Grant. The \$75,000 grant will go toward two playscapes for kids in Bandera City Park.

“I don’t think this is the right time to approve this,” BEDC Member Lauren Ojeda said, objecting the motion. “I don’t think it’s the best use of funds.”

The projected start date to install the equipment is March of 2022, City Administrator David Jordan said.

\* One applicant has submitted her resumé for the administrative assistant position. Keely Hansen, also the city's administrative assistant, applied for the job, however members were unable to pass a formal vote because two weeks have not yet passed since the opening was advertised.

\* The newly-formed Bandera Community Action Group asked to use EDC-owned lights to decorate the City Park for Christmas. Last year, some of the lights were used to decorate the courthouse lawn. BEDC President Jerad Wilcox said the BCAG is looking for volunteers who are willing to take leadership positions.

“The idea is to get community more involved in the Christmas lights, and get their input,” Wilcox said.

The next BCAG meeting will be Oct. 30, at City Park, under the pavilion.

\* BEDC members unanimously approved comprising a list of suggested locations and designs for wayfinding signs. BEDC Member Laura Devenport said with the Christmas lights in the park and upcoming solar eclipse, it is time to get some signs up.

\* Finally, members agreed to change their meeting time from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

“We need to cater to people who work, and many people do not close until 6,” Devenport said.