

The Bandera PROPHEET

November 3, 2021

Bandera EDC members consider land sale, approve promotional fund grants

By Jessica Nohealapa'ahi
The Bandera Prophet

Three entities seeking to purchase a coveted piece of land from the Bandera Economic Development Corporation are now down to two, both of whom are entering negotiations.

Art Crawford, executive director of the Silver Sage, withdrew his initial proposal to purchase the entire parcel on Buck Creek Drive for \$400,000, and instead offered \$64,000 for just under two acres on the corner. Crawford said he intends to build a two-story food bank that will also serve as a food pantry and provide much-needed office space for several organizations, including the Alamo Regional Transit Authority, the Hill Country Crisis Center and the Mental Health Developmental and Disabilities (MHDD) Center.

“I think it does a huge amount to have it across from the Silver Sage,” EDC Board President Jerad Wilcox said. “Being a volunteer at the Mansfield Park food drive, that is something that will get a lot of good use. To me they’ve got a solid plan.”

Crawford said the facility will serve many functions.

“We’re not just about senior citizens,” Crawford said, adding the Silver Sage is the county’s American Red Cross shelter. “Within two hours we can be ready to shelter 200 people.”

EDC members voted unanimously to authorize Wilcox to move forward with Crawford to manage the sale of the land.

Addressing the second offer, EDC members voted four to one to enter into negotiations with Johnny Boyle, Pat Boyle and Gay Guillot to purchase the remaining 4.766 acres for nearly \$385,000. The Boyles and

Guillot originally offered \$450,000 cash for the entire lot, however they rescinded their offer after formalizing an agreement with Crawford to split the property. Although neither offer is contingent on the other, the two offers combined still total \$450,000.

EDC Board Member Alan Arterbury said he felt the Boyles' offer was low, and would be interested in seeing the outcome if a For Sale sign went up. EDC Board Member Lauren Ojeda concurred.

"If our goal is to maximize our profit, I'm all for putting it on the market," Ojeda said, adding she was in favor of placing restrictions on the sale of the land, but also liked the idea of someone local taking ownership of it. "I feel like people who come from here, know here, so that's a big plus for me."

Johnny Boyle said his intent was to buy and develop the land. He said he and his partners were considering a multi-use business facility combined with residential, however he did not have a precise timeline for construction.

"We can't spend a bunch of money on feasibility studies on land we don't own," Boyle said.

In a previous meeting, he said the city is dependent on sales tax revenue and commercial property values, especially in light of major pending infrastructure projects, including relocating the wastewater treatment plant.

"We're not encouraging people to stay inside the city. We are bleeding and it will not stop until we allow some development," Boyle said. "We have to find a way for people to stay and build businesses that equate to jobs. If we don't increase the tax base, we're on a deadend street. We have big bills coming."

EDC Board Member Toni Kunz said she would like to schedule a workshop to further discuss the offer.

"I, for one, am not ready to make this decision tonight," Kunz said.

"This is an extremely important decision."

EDC Board Member Donna Burns said she felt the same as Kunz.

“We haven’t gone out to look for anybody. We haven’t talked to the attorney yet,” Burns said, regarding placing the property on the market. “I would like to put it out there and see what kind of responses we get.” Countering a proposed delay, Ojeda said the board should at least discuss the bid.

“We need to open the negotiations and address the offer we’ve seen,” Ojeda said, whose motion to enter negotiations passed with Burns opposed.

The final offer from the Bandera Fire & Rescue Department was unanimously rejected. Deputy Willie Smith proposed building a large fire house on the corner - the same area Crawford put a bid on.

“I would say the citizens would be better served by a fire department,” Smith said. “If the Best Western catches on fire, the closest ladder truck is at Medina Lake.”

Wilcox said he was working with the department to find other land tracts that would be more suitable.

The EDC purchased the property in 2017 for \$374,170 as an investment.

In other business, promotional funds were approved for the Texas Hill Country Music Fest for \$1,500; the Bandera Brewery Beerfest for \$1,100; the Bandera County Chamber of Commerce BuckFest for \$4,000; Bandera Honors Veterans 2022 for \$2,000; the Bandera ProRodeo Association for \$10,000; the Bandera Business Association’s Cowboys on Main for \$10,000; the Ridin’ on Faith Rodeo for \$1,000; and the Medina River Clean-up for \$1,000.