

Horton Revitalization Moves Forward

(KNZA)--With some concerns laid to rest, the City of Horton moves forward with expending the funds necessary to continue the effort of downtown revitalization.

The total cost for the latest phase of work is over \$365,000, including sidewalk and street work, as well as the installation of streetlights. However, it's possible some aspects could be scaled back as a cost saving measure.

The work will be conducted in two blocks of Horton's downtown district, as well as one block north of that area. The city had previously committed \$240,000 towards a remodel of the city.

Approval was granted Wednesday during a special meeting of the Horton City Commission scheduled after Commissioner Wade Edwards, during Monday's regular session, voiced apprehension at moving forward if that meant the expenditure of tax dollars on demolishing two dilapidated downtown buildings planned to be purchased by businessman, philanthropist and television host Marcus Lemonis, a key player in the effort to bring new life to the city.

However, his unsigned contracts for the purchase, and planned demolition, caused hesitation in moving forward with the project. A Tuesday phone call between Mayor Tim Lentz and Lemonis eased Edwards' concerns and he made the motion to move forward with the effort.

Lemonis, during the call, told Lentz he will finalize the contracts, which he committed to in late July, by early October, and also offered to help with a fund raising effort which he believes will easily generate upwards of \$60,000 towards the overall price tag. "Mr. Lemonis is hearing the negativity as well as I am and the Commission's hearing the negativity that Mr. Lemonis will never come through," Lentz stated during Wednesday's meeting. "I don't believe that. I think the guy is committed, but I think also our daily lives are not as contractual and as busy as his is." Lemonis apparently has been hesitant in finalizing his commitment until the city produced a plan for the project and backed it financially.

The Commission ultimately voted unanimously to proceed with the project, setting the start date for the latest phase as October 10th.

It was obvious that Commissioner Bryan Stirton was hesitant, leading Lentz to ask him whether his vote was for or against.

Stirton says that while he did vote in favor of proceeding, he is disappointed that contracts from Lemonis are not yet signed and monetary transactions are not yet in place. He is hopeful that the cost of the work can be scaled back while maintaining a uniform look for beautification of the city.

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