



Belle banner

City of Belle approves lease of MFA Building to Osage Arts Community

The City of Belle has approved the lease of the former MFA Building to the Osage Arts Community (OAC) for a restoration project.

OAC Executive Director Mark McClane asked the city for a three year lease in order to explore use options, solicit grants to fund renovations and initiate those renovations before returning the renovated

“Mill” to the City of Belle.

McClane said he plans to establish a volunteer group to come up with renovation plans and begin applying for grants to fund those renovations.

Initial renovation ideas include a wrap-around deck, outdoor gathering space for the community, and antique mill implements for display.

McClane said he hopes the

building to become a “focal point” for walking trail users.

“Historically, our community has routinely torn things down. There’s not a will to rejuvenate or renovate it,” said McClane. “My agency is in the business of renovating really poor, sick buildings.”

McClane said OAC would cover the insurance for the renovation project as

well as the volunteers working on the project. However, since the city owns the building, the building itself will be covered under the city’s insurance.

“We are serious about this project,” McClane said. “I think it’s a tremendous opportunity for our community.”

Mayor Steve Vogt said McClane has done a good job at thinking this project out and felt it was an excellent opportunity.

said McClane.

McClane said the function of a trail head is basically a parking area for people to meet.

Vogt believed the Gascondy Bridge and the railroad tunnel would be big attractions for trail users. He said the Dept. of Natural Resources has already seen first-hand the great opportunity the MFA building offered for the trail.

McClane said unfortunately there is not a lot of historical documentation regarding the building. He is hoping to locate historical information and have it on display.

McClane said he plans to host a public forum regarding the project this fall and organize a volunteer group at that time. He is hoping the Friends of the Trail will become involved as well since the projects go

↓ Alderman Richard Huse ↓ said the Trails Committee would like to have a “trail head” every 10 miles and said logically Belle could have a trail head. The committee would like water and electricity available at all trail head locations. He said he didn’t believe anything was going to happen with the trail until 2018.

↓ hand-in-hand. After that, ↓ design plans will be discussed so they know how much grant money to apply for. He said the grants he is considering do not open until February.

Huse said he was informed the rails will be taken up for recycling in our area in September or October.

McClane said it will take

“That timeline works out perfectly with this project,”

“We need to do something. It’s going bad just sitting there,” said Vogt. “We expect our community to clean up their property and have it up to snuff and we need to do the same thing with our property and make it something this town can be proud of. It is a historic site. If it’s torn down, it’s gone forever.” ↓ ↓

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■ Lease

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approximately 18 months before they hear anything on grant funding.

"I know people are going to be getting excited about this project, but it is going to take some time."

This newspaper will publish the date of the public forum once it has been scheduled.