

# City of Menominee OKs land purchase

## Price is \$239K for 80-acre parcel

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MENOMINEE—The City of Menominee agreed Monday to purchase for \$239,000 an 80-acre parcel on W 56th 2.5 Road being sold in “as is” condition.

The city’s “right of first refusal” to purchase the property took effect when an interested buyer made an offer for the property after the owner died. The city had to act quickly and agree to pay the price offered by the interested buyer or walk away from the opportunity.

“I’m very pleased at the council’s decision. It’s in the best long-term interests of the community,” said Joe Dulak, the listing agent on the property at W5592 56th 2.5 Road, where a house and garage sit. The property, which extends well beyond the residential lot, was owned by the late Michael Anderson. Jerome Anderson is the administrator of the estate.

The price amounts to about \$3,000 an acre, though some of the land is in a wetlands area not suitable for building unless the wetlands are filled in, city council members said. They estimated 39 acres are usable for residential or industrial development, but the area will require \$1 million in capital expenditures for water and sewer infrastructure, they said.

If the usable land was divided into 20 two-acre residential lots

with homes valued at \$400,000, it could generate \$180,000 in new tax revenue per year, Dulak told the EagleHerald after the meeting. Some of the acreage is near the industrial park and could be used for businesses.

“This is long-term smart city planning. They call it ‘smart planning,’” Dulak said after Monday’s special city council meeting. “The city has everything to gain and nothing to lose. They will never have the opportunity to buy this again,” if the council didn’t agree to purchase the land.

Six council members voted in favor of the purchase—Josh Jones, Wendy Baron, Michael DeDamos, Dennis Klitzke, Jacqueline Nutter and Bill Plemel, while Mayor Jean Stegeman and council members Frank Pohlmann and Donna Marineau voted against it.

During a lengthy discussion, the council members debated whether it was the city’s role to serve as a real estate developer.

Stegeman said the purchase price amounts to about 10% of the city’s fund balance. “There’s an awful amount of money that needs to get spent, and then there will be the tax abatement that comes up. And the net payback on this is a long-time option. I want you to keep that in mind,” she said.

But Nutter said the council should focus on the positives. “I think there’s a lot of opportunity here. Instead of what if it goes bad, what if it goes well? Let’s give our community, our city, a long-term vision instead of us being afraid to take chances,” she said. “I think we should take the opportunity while we’ve got it.”

Pohlmann said the city would



EagleHerald/Ann Meyer

**The City of Menominee could annex an 80-acre property on 56th 2.5 Road by investing an estimated \$1 million in water and sewer infrastructure. The house and garage shown above are located at W5592 56th 2.5 Rd.**

be using the general fund to purchase the land. He questioned whether the city should be in the business of purchasing real estate. “I don’t know whether the purchase price is a fair purchase price,” he said. While he listened to Dulak’s earlier sales presentation, Pohlmann said the information hadn’t been verified.

“As far as I’m concerned, there are too many uncertainties that I can’t really justify going out today or tomorrow and spending \$240,000 of taxpayer money,” Pohlmann said. “It’s not too far from the landfill. There are some creeks running there,” Pohlmann said.

The property is adjacent to another wetlands parcel the city owns but hasn’t developed. The purchase price is just the starting point, Stegeman said. The full cost of developing the property for market isn’t known.

“We have no environmental study on this whatsoever,” Stegeman said. City Manager and Police Chief Brett Botbyl said the city learned of the opportunity last week and hasn’t had time to fully investigate the property. “We don’t have a lot of time to go out

there and have a survey,” Botbyl said.

Nancy Douglas, director of the Menominee Economic Development Corporation, said the city talked to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy a couple of years ago about an area near the available parcel that was largely wetlands. “We asked about remediation of the property and (EGLE’s) response was it was more costly to do than ever,” Douglas said.

While economic development grants might be available to pay for improvements, often the agency providing the grant funds prefers to provide funds when a company is actively interested in the location, Douglas said. “There are grants we can apply for, but there aren’t any guarantees,” she said.

Marineau asked Douglas if any businesses have approached the Menominee Economic Development Corporation about expanding near the property. “I’ve been talking to one business that wants to expand; whether they would be interested in that property, I don’t know,” Douglas said.

Douglas said when businesses

do approach her with an interest in locating in Menominee, she would like to be able to offer them a location. “Those requests start out with how much acreage they want, what kind of zone, and we have no response.”

“Within the city limits, we have very little property for business,” she said. “I recognize it’s a tough decision, but it’s one we need to make,” she said to council members. “I see it as an investment. You see it as an expense.”

After considering other council members’ comments, Plemel put aside concerns and supported the purchase. Given the high rate of inflation and the uncertainty in the stock market, buying real estate might be good for the city, he said.

“Land is going up terribly high. This is an investment,” he said, noting the city can’t expand to the south, east or west because the Menominee River, the Bay of Green Bay and the airport serve as barriers to expansion. “The only way we can expand the tax base is to the north,” Plemel said. “If worse comes to worst, we can sell the property. I can’t remember a time in the city of Menominee where the city land actually went down. Once it’s clear, it stays the same or goes up.”

But Pohlmann said the city isn’t supposed to put its money in speculative investments. “We as a city are not allowed to gamble,” he said. “That’s why there are certain limitations on how we can invest our money.”

Klitzke said the city could sell the land if it decided not to develop it. With an offer already on the table, “I don’t think it would be a bad investment.”

## FROM A1

## FIRE:

Sal B Scrap Metal Recycling, W1311 Highway 64, is located just west of the roundabout on the south side of the road. It was the home of Chet’s Auto Wrecking from 1932 until a few years ago when Sal B purchased the location.

Folger said the fire started on a pile of scrap metal, but how it started is unknown. He said Sal B employees were interviewed.

“It’s going to be a tough fire to investigate; there’s not much to investigate,” he said. “We know roughly where it started, but it’s going to be difficult to find out exactly what caused it. At this point it’s undetermined. We do not anticipate any foul play.”

He estimated the pile was about 200 to 300 feet long by 150 feet wide and 30 to 40 feet tall.

“It was cars, trucks, you name it, anything scrap metal that you can imagine,” he said. “But all of that was prepped and drained

and cleaned—no fluids in the area that burned.”

He said there was a pile of intact cars immediately north of the engulfed pile that were threatened by the fire but they did not burn. Those vehicles had intact fuel tanks and other liquids, he said.

The shop building contained flammable liquids, but it also did not burn, the chief said.

Onlookers could hear periodic popping noises coming from the fire. “There was a number of minor explosions, but there was not any flammable liquids (in the pile),” Folger said. The two homes immediately west of location were evacuated; other nearby residents were told to stay inside because of the smoke. The roundabout and a portion of Highway 64 were closed.

Folger said homes along County Trunk T, toward U.S. 41, were not in danger thanks to Mother Nature.

“We were fortunate that the wind direction was out of the southeast,” he said, “it was pretty much blowing all

the smoke away from Marinette.”

Folger, with decades of experience, described the look of the fire similar to the old knitting mill fire on Pierce Avenue in Marinette a few years ago. He said because this was a “wind driven” fire, it was hard to stop.

He described the difficulties that wind brings to a fire.

“Adding that oxygen fans

the flames and it increases the speed of combustion,” Folger explained. “With a strong wind that fire wants to move. The smoke lays down low and it spreads the fire a lot faster.”

Folger said the Sal B owner and employees were on site today. A call to Sal B was not immediately returned to the EagleHerald.

Folger said there were no injuries to civilians or fire

personnel.

Besides the Town of Peshtigo, other departments that assisted were Marinette, Peshtigo, Grover-Porterfield, Wagner, Coleman, Pound, Little River, Lake and Middle Inlet. The DNR assisted with a grass fire that spawned from the main fire.

The Marinette ERS and Aurora Medical Center Bay Area paramedics were on scene, along with the Marinette County Sheriff’s Office,

Marinette Police, Menominee Police, Wisconsin State Patrol, Marinette County Highway Department, Marinette County Dispatch, Wisconsin Public Service and the fire department auxiliary. Also, Mike Biehl, owner of MJB Industries, brought in heavy equipment and Country Visions Co-Op provided fuel for the trucks.

“We had a lot of help out there,” Folger said.

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