

Solon T I M E S

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Mayor suggests city charging stations for electric cars

By SUE REID

Electric vehicles are only going to grow in popularity in the future, and Solon Mayor Edward H. Kraus wants the city to be on the cutting edge.

Mayor Kraus said he envisions the city being the site of various charging stations for vehicles moving forward. A possibility is having a charging station at the Solon Community Center, he said.

His comments followed a discussion at the last City Council Finance Committee meeting on the city's receipt of a \$61,189 grant from the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council.

A charter member of NOPEC since 2000, the city of Solon saves over \$40,000 annually for its residents in electric and natural gas pricing.

The cash grants are intended to be used by member communities primarily for energy-related projects. A NOPEC grant the city received in 2011 of slightly more than \$219,000 was used for emergency efficiency improvements at the Water Reclamation plant.

Mayor Kraus said of the charging stations that there are various projections by national economists and automobile experts that there will be a large percentage of electric vehicles in the next decade or more.

"The reality is that electric vehicles are here

Turn to Electric on Page 6

Developer eyes Solon for new warehouse

By SUE REID

Solon city planners last week lauded a plan for a new warehouse proposed by a national developer in the city's industrial district on Solon Road.

Scannell Properties of Indianapolis, Indiana has agreed to acquire about 22.87 acres of land at 34350 Solon Road, on the south side of Erico Drive, subject to zoning approvals, stormwater management issues and financing.

They plan to use the site for one industrial warehouse, Solon Logistics Center, measuring over 293,000 square feet. The planned construction would consist of one building with truck docks, trailer storage and employee parking.

The land, owned by Jay Reality LLC and once eyed for luxury apartments, was rezoned in 2019 from the C-3 commercial zoning district to the I-2 industrial manufacturing zoning district.

The I-2 zoning allows for manufacturing, warehousing, distribution and office uses.

The commission tabled the site plan in anticipation of a landscape plan which is being developed in conjunction with the city's landscape architect this month. The landscape plan, required by code, will pay attention to noise and lighting and provide adequate buffering to surrounding residential subdivisions, Planning Director Robert S.

Turn to Develop on Page 6



Photo by Geoff Powers

St. Rita third-grader Luca DiFranco of Twinsburg puts the finishing touches on a handmade cross that will be donated along with about 25 others to residents at the Anna Maria Nursing Home in Aurora. The wooden cross creation was part of a Lenten giving project for the students at St. Rita Catholic School in Solon.

Exploring three pillars of Lent

Students create crosses for giving while learning meaning of holiday

By SUE REID

Hard at work last week painting and decorating wooden crosses, St. Rita School third-graders are learning the spirit of giving that is the Lenten season.

"We talk about the three pillars of Lent," third-grade teacher Heather Bianco said, which are pray, fast and give.

"This is our giving," she said.

The crosses, which number about 25 and hang from a rawhide string, will be donated next week to residents of the Anna Maria Nursing Home in Aurora, which St. Rita has partnered with the past two years to send various items each month.

"I hope that the people there feel special and that they are needed," Solon third-grader Reagan Toth, 9, said of her cross donation.

Reagan said that Lent for her, means family time and helping others. She painted her cross purple, which is the color of Advent.

Since the start of Lent last month, which lasts 40 days and culminates on Easter Sunday on April 4, students are taught the lessons of the season and how they relate to life.

"We talk about the Stations of the Cross and how we are relating them to our lives," third-grade teacher Mary Jankowski explained. "Through this activity they learn about helping others."

"I want them to feel happy that I gave them the cross," 8-year-old Timmy Schramm, a third-grader from Solon, said. He included a quote about Jesus on his cross and painted it shades of blue and green.

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Commissioners approve additional legal fees for Supreme Court case

By SAMANTHA COTTRILL

Attorney fees are on the rise with the Geauga County Commissioners' approval of a \$10,000 increase in outside legal counsel for Geauga Probate and Juvenile Court Judge Timothy Grendell, bringing the not-to-exceed total to \$30,000, in his case against Auditor Charles Walder in the Ohio Supreme Court.

Commissioners approved the increase in a 2-1 vote, with board President James Dvorak and Vice President Timothy Lennon voting for the increase and Ralph Spidalieri against, during their Feb. 23 meeting.

County Administrator Gerry Morgan presented the request from Roetzel & Andress, LPA, an Akron-based law firm, to the commissioners on behalf of the probate and juvenile court. Stephen Funk of Roetzel & Andress is representing Judge Grendell in the case.

"We started it at \$10,000, we increased it another \$10,000 to [get up to] \$20,000, and this is an additional increase of \$10,000 to not exceed \$30,000," Commission Clerk Christine Blair explained.

Judge Grendell filed a writ of mandamus against Mr. Walder in September of 2020 to compel the payment of about \$26,000 in court-related expenditures after Geauga commissioners

approved outside legal counsel in an amount not to exceed \$10,000. Some of the outstanding vouchers date as far back as 2018, according to the court docket.

Judge Grendell pursued legal action against the auditor for the payment of the outstanding vouchers after Mr. Walder's refusal to release funds for about \$4,000 worth of robocalls and local newspaper ads with the statement, "No tax dollars were used" included in the advertisements.

In a "hair splitting argument," Judge Grendell said the court utilized a discretionary fund to pay for the calls and advertisement, which is supported by court fees, and therefore not "tax dollars." He said the court has authority under state law to spend this fund as it sees fit and that the auditor had no authority over the content of the court advertisements.

Mr. Walder, however, claimed the ads misrepresented the use of "taxpayers' dollars," stating he has a responsibility to taxpayers to vet the law and ensure their money is used properly and in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code.

As of this past December – when the court referred the case to mediation that subsequently failed and returned to the court in January – Mr. Funk had billed the commissioners about \$14,000, Mr. Morgan said.

"The auditor's being covered by the CORSA

[County Risk-Sharing Association] insurance right now," he added. "At this point, they are at around \$22,000 that they have expended."

Mr. Walder is represented by Frank H. Scialdone of Mazanec, Raskin & Ryder Co., LPA, a Cleveland-based law firm.

Mr. Morgan said Judge Grendell is not represented by the county's insurance because he is the party who brought on the case. "The insurance covers defense," he said.

CORSA covers \$27,500, including a \$2,500 deductible, he told the commissioners.

"So, they're almost up," Mr. Lennon said.

Mr. Morgan confirmed this, stating that they are getting close to the point where Mr. Walder's representation will have to start billing the commissioners directly.

"So, we're looking close to about \$60,000 right now," Mr. Lennon said. "And nothing's really happening."

"It's nothing at this point," Mr. Morgan said. "What basically happened is they found out that they need to go up before the Supreme Court."

"And as soon as they go to the Supreme Court it'll be over with, they'll make a decision?" Mr. Dvorak asked.

Mr. Morgan said a decision is not likely to happen until after hearings and briefings with

money requested on behalf of the auditor's attorney.

He explained that mediation failed because the mediator from the High Court informed him it was a decision the Supreme Court should make because of conflict in power given to each party under state law.

"There [are] rules in the Ohio Revised Code that cover the judge and rules in the Ohio Revised Code that cover the auditor, and from what I understand from discussions that the mediator of the Supreme Court said, there is some conflict between the [laws]," Mr. Morgan said.

"I bet you if this was coming out of your back pocket, you would have dropped this thing like a hot potato and figured out a way to get it done, right?" Mr. Lennon said.

"I can't disagree with that," Mr. Morgan laughed.

Mr. Dvorak asked if there was a motion, and after a long pause ultimately made the motion himself.

Mr. Lennon, after another pause, seconded the motion, taking yet another pause before ultimately voting for the increase along with Mr. Dvorak.

"I guess the only hope to look at it is maybe you do get a final decision from the Supreme Court, then all this arguing back and forth between the auditor and the probate and juvenile court will end and we can move forward," Mr. Morgan said, "but I can't guarantee that that will happen either."

Washington Street work to begin

By SAMANTHA COTTRILL

Geauga County Commissioners authorized the asphalt resurfacing and road improvements for Washington Street in Auburn Township.

The project speculations include the realignment, milling and resurfacing of 3.23 miles from Bainbridge Road to Ravenna Road (Route 44), as well as drainage improvements, according to the Geauga County Engineer's Office.

Deputy Engineer Shane Hajjar said the project is estimated to cost \$2.9 million, locally funded, and was postponed from last year due to anticipated funding restraints as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's been a labor of love, or something," Mr. Hajjar said of the project.

"This is a large-scale project for our office to rehabilitate the storm sewer system that runs along the south side [of the road]," he told the commissioners during a Feb. 23 meeting. "It's over 100 years old. It's not functioning at its original capacity."

"The plans include removal of the curb on the south side of the road for 95 percent of it, replacement of the storm sewer with either open or enclosed ditches and paving the north side shoulder to put the road more on its true survey center line," he continued. "Right now, it's about 5 feet off center line, favoring the south side."

Mr. Hajjar explained that the section of Washington used to be part of U.S. 422 as a federal highway but switched to a county highway between the 1960s and 1970s.

Commissioner Timothy Lennon said he, Mr. Hajjar and County Engineer Joe Cattell had worked to source funding for the project over the past three to four years, but the project will ultimately be 100-percent locally funded.

Mr. Hajjar added, however, that from the South Russell village line to Chillicothe Road (Route 306), the county should be able to secure federal funding for Washington Street improvements in 2022.

He said the improvements are divided into three separate projects.

"This is the first project; this is all local funding," he said of the current project. "And then the [South] Russell to 306 is a federally funded project in 2022. And then from 306 to Bainbridge Road in 2023."

Mr. Hajjar said the current cost of \$2.9 million is about \$1 million less than the original estimate, explaining that the original estimate came from anticipating federal funding since the highway was once federally owned. "We had added additional measures and costs associated with managing a federally funded project of this nature, and since we are doing this locally, many of those cost inflators are not going to be there."

"Since it was a federal road at one time, I was really hopeful that NOACA would be able to provide us some assistance in this project," Mr. Lennon said.

"Their timing and their methodology made this not a good fit," Mr. Hajjar said. Despite not receiving additional funding for the improvements, he said the county ultimately will not struggle to finance the project, noting about \$1 million that carried over from the county engineer's budget due to postponing the project.

Bids for the project will be accepted until March 24 at 1:45 p.m. with openings immediately following that same day at 2 p.m.

"Washington Street's going to see a lot of activity over the next few years," Mr. Hajjar said, "and then those folks probably won't see us for quite a long time other than other routine maintenance."



Photo by Geoff Powers

St. Rita Catholic School third-graders in Marsha Jankowski's class in Solon are hard at work to put the Lenten pillar of giving into practice. Under the guidance of art teacher Julie Purich, the students use bright and colorful paints to decorate wooden crosses that they plan to donate to residents of the Anna Maria Nursing Home in Aurora.

Lent continued from Page 1

"It makes me feel grateful to do this for them," 9-year-old Giada Petitti of Twinsburg, said. Her cross was in shades of red, pink, orange, yellow and white.

Lent to Giada means "love," she said.

"The lesson I'm giving them is that we are doing this to spread joy, bring positivity to those [who] are in need and serve Jesus," St. Rita art teacher Julie Purich said. She instructed the students to make the crosses colorful and bright so as to be uplifting for the residents of Anna Maria.

Some crosses included inspirational or biblical quotes and sayings like, "We are

praying for you," and "Jesus loves you."

Students worked on their creations for about two weeks. The crosses were made and donated by first-grade teacher Kathy DiSanto's brother-in-law Fred DiSanto.

In addition to the crosses, the school took part in a sock drive through their National Junior Honor Society.

Noah Lesko, 9, of South Russell, said he wanted his cross to have symbols of God's gifts, such as water.

"He is washing sins away," Noah said.

For Noah, Lent is about being close to God and sacrificing, he said.

"Some of the designs are showing God, and I want them to really see that," Noah added.

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