



Linn County receives 2 bids for SH mill property

ALBANY — The Linn County Board of Commissioners reviewed two bids for the former Willamette Industries mill site Tuesday morning.

County Property Manager Rachel Adamec opened a bid of \$800,000 from Sweet Home Real Estate Restorations LLC, whose principal is Joshua Victor of Sweet Home, and \$450,000 from Sweet Home Mill Site LLC, whose principal is Scott Lepman of Albany.

Victor's bid included a cashier's check for the full amount of the bid and Lepman's check was for \$45,000, or 10% of the bid. The property is being sold "as is."

The property has a real market value of \$1,646,550, but the minimum acceptable bid was set at \$406,087.

Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker and Adamec will review the bids with county counsel and anticipate announcing a bid award at next Tuesday's meeting.

Linn County took possession of the site about 12 years ago for more than \$500,000 in back taxes. The property was part of a planned, but failed, housing project by Western States Land Reliance Trust.

The property includes about 150 acres. Linn County recently agreed to give the city of Sweet Home about three acres for possible development of a homeless encampment.

Over the years, Linn County has worked with the Department of Environmental Quality and former owner Weyerhaeuser, identifying and mitigating contaminated areas of the property. Commissioner Tucker has focused on that work and has said he believes final environmental clearances were coming within the year.

Sale of the property will remove Linn County from that process.

The county has previously offered the property for sale and at one point received four bids, but turned them down. At another auction, the minimum bid was set at \$2.7 million and attracted no bidders.

The county had considered selling individual parcels of the property, but members of the Sweet Home City Council asked that the property be sold as one unit. Linn County was concerned that if sold as one unit, the purchaser could partition contaminated areas and not pay taxes on them. In six years, Linn County could be forced to take over those parcels in lieu of back taxes.



Linn County had also offered to give the property to the city of Sweet Home, but the offer was rejected because city councilors were concerned environmental cleanup cost could be expensive.

Linn County has previously given the city 220 acres that was the former Morse Brothers and then Knife River quarry that borders the South Santiam River. The community plans to develop the site into a venue for the Oregon Jamboree and other community activities.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved an intergovernmental agreement with Greater Albany Public Schools. Linn County will provide two COVID-19 contact tracers during school hours from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2022. GAPS will make nine payments of \$16,667.67 per month, not to exceed \$150,000. Board Chair Nyquist noted he also sits on the GAPS Board of Education.
- Approved an agreement with Linn-Benton Com-

munity College for the use of the college's parking lot to conduct FEMA COVID-19 vaccination clinics from Feb. 13 to 18.

- Approved a contract with HMK Company to provide management of the Willamette Health Center renovation project, not to exceed \$75,840.
- Awarded the Thomas Creek Richardson Gap Road (Shimanek Covered Bridge) bid to Marcum & Sons LLC of Redmond for \$2,993,068. Legacy Contracting of Stayton was actual low bidder at \$2,869,908, but had failed to renew its prequalification certification. The engineer's estimate is \$2,780,572.
- Approved annexation of property at 25575 Gap Road into the Brownsville Rural Fire Protection District.

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