

St Charles fire district picks site for new station

By James Fuller | Daily Herald Staff

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A site is secured to build a new firehouse, now all the St. Charles Countryside Fire Protection District needs is the money from voters to actually build it.

The district seeks permission on the April ballot to borrow about \$2 million to build and operate a new firehouse in the western portion of the district. Trustees also hoped prudent budgeting would allow - with any leftover money - to consider a new firehouse in the eastern portion of the district as well. A new land deal makes that future look more possible.

Trustees accepted a letter of intent this week to acquire up to two acres of donated land on Route 64, just east of LaFox and Burlington roads in Campton Hills. The deal allows the district to save up to \$1.5 million, money trustees thought they'd have to spend to buy land for the new firehouse. Instead, Central Development Corporation will donate the land to the firehouse. In turn, the corporation will reap the benefit of being the construction manager on the project.

The land was originally part of the Campton Square site, but dedicated to the Wasco Sanitary District. The district recently decided it did not need the land, giving the fire district a solution to the concerns of residents in the Burlington Tree subdivision area. Those residents are adamantly opposed to the district building a firehouse near them on a strip of the land the fire district already owns.

Instead, the fire district will sell that land when the economy improves. The profits will go into the district's operations and savings.

District President Ed Malek said he hopes the district securing the donated land will be a positive sign to taxpayers who might be unsure whether the district is doing everything it can to manage its resources wisely in light of the referendum. If everything, including the April referendum, falls into place, the district will begin considering a second new firehouse on the east side, possibly in Wayne. But that project is much further down the line.

Another issue the district must tackle if the referendum passes is negotiating with the St. Charles Fire Department to actually staff the new firehouse. Malek said those discussions won't happen until the fate of the referendum is known. Malek said he is confident, however, that St. Charles can legally staff the new firehouse even though it would be located outside of the St. Charles city limits.