

Old county shop buildings to be removed

By Alexa Zoellner azoellner@dailyunion.com | Posted: Thursday, December 3, 2015 8:57 am

JEFFERSON — Five of the nine buildings that sit on the “old” Jefferson County highway shop property were sold for a total of \$19,871, before tax, in a month-long online auction that closed Monday.

The Jefferson County Infrastructure Committee was informed of the sales by Jefferson County Administrator Ben Wehmeier during its meeting Wednesday.

“The auction officially closed on Monday,” Wehmeier said. “It was very interesting. On Monday afternoon, we opened it up and a couple of these buildings we did very well on. We sold all five buildings for just under \$20,000.”

It is unclear exactly how the money will be spent, but it will be going back to Jefferson County, according to Wehmeier. Most likely it will be placed in the general fund and used for expenditures.

The auction, held on Wisconsin Surplus Online Auction, included four storage buildings and a fuel truck shed. Final bids, not including tax, ranged from \$1,065 to \$12,000.

Geoff Wegner, Watertown, purchased the two-stall fuel truck shed for \$2,291; Jeff Siegler of Siegler Grading and Excavating LLC, Elkhorn, bought an “L-shaped” storage building for \$2,500; a two-story storage facility went to Steven Demeter, Deerfield, Ill., for \$1,065; a heated storage facility was bought by Nicholas Smith of Rae Transport LLC, Elkhorn, for \$2,015; and the fifth storage facility was sold to Steve Pekul of Pekul Inc., Elkhorn, for \$12,000.

“Our requirement as part of the bid process is they had to remove the buildings,” Wehmeier said. “(They sold for) better than I thought it would be because they have to demolish (the buildings) basically. It’s saving us money because originally we were looking at having to pay for someone to tear those down, so it’s a win-win.”



WORKING WELL

WORKING WELL — The Jefferson County Infrastructure Committee took a tour of the Highway Department’s new facility on Wednesday. The shop opened roughly six months ago and, except for a few pieces of equipment still at the old facility, the department is all moved in. For more photos, [click here](#). — Daily Union photos by Alexa Zoellner

The buyers have until Jan. 4, 2016, to remove the entirety of the structures, leaving only the concrete foundations cleared of debris.

Located at 141 W. Woolcock St. near the center of the City of Jefferson, the facility served as the county highway shop for more than 80 years, with some of the buildings dating back as far as 1923.

A study completed in 2000 by Omni Associates, Appleton, revealed space deficiencies, safety concerns and some serious site limitations.

“They were looking at (getting a new facility) for a long time,” Wehmeier said after the meeting. “Part of it was looking at the size of the facility, the condition of the facility was a big part of it. You see the new facility and the size of the vehicles and equipment we’ve got and a lot of the maintenance facilities (at the old shop) were not adequate to meet the newer sized vehicles.”

The new highway shop, located at 1425 Wisconsin Drive (County Highway W), officially opened earlier this year. The site of the former Countryside Home, the highway shop is now home to the Highway Department’s entire fleet of 60-plus vehicles.

“We’re in the last phase of moving out some equipment and some items of the old buildings, but we hope to be completely out by the end of the year,” Highway Commissioner Bill Kern said following the meeting. “The new facility is working really well. Running the first winter storm out of here worked out really well. It’s a lot of space, much more efficient with our salt sheds and brine system. The new buildings are working out well. We’re still organizing some things in them, but everything’s been very good so far.”

As for the four remaining buildings on the old highway shop property, Wehmeier said he expects them to be placed up for sale sometime in the near future.

“The two salt sheds, we’ll probably put those on auction here soon,” he said. “I’m not quite sure what we’re going to do with the main facility. We’ve already had some inquiries about part of the main facility. We had surprisingly great success (with the sale), so we’ll keep going with it.”

Also expected to sell is the land itself, although when that would take place is unknown.

“At some point, we’ll be looking at probably selling (the land),” Wehmeier said. “We’ve looked at it and there’s really not a county need for it. Obviously, the city’s looking at this for potential opportunities for development. One area specifically they’d like to see is, potentially, more public access to the river.”