

Second Street Property Is Pursued

The North Wilkesboro commissioners on Tuesday night agreed to move ahead with consideration of buying 19.43 acres off Second Street as the site of new facilities for the North Wilkesboro police and fire departments.

The commissioners voted unanimously to have Town Attorney Gary Vannoy and Town Manager Larry South prepare and execute an option to purchase the property, which also is near F and J streets and Euclid Avenue.

South said acquiring the option would provide time for town staff to determine suitability of the property for a facility with both police and fire stations. County property tax records identify the owners as "R.T. Mathis et al."

South recommended the Second Street property last month as the best option out of several presented by ADW Architects, which was hired to study them. The estimated price for acquiring the property and building the facility is \$7.2 million.

Other options studied by the consulting firm were renovating the former Wilkes County Women's Detention Center on Boston Avenue for a primary fire station, renovating the existing police station on Main Street and building a joint facility on the site of the former Elks Lodge at the intersection of Finley Avenue and Second Street.

Fire Chief Jimmy Martin said he wasn't against the Second Street property and wouldn't argue the issue since it's the best option for a joint facility, but said he didn't think it was best for a fire station.

"The Elks Lodge is more centrally located," he said. "And from a taxpayer's point of view, I would like my fire department to be seen."

The building would not be visible from a road if built on the Second Street property.

Martin said he also believed traffic on Second Street would make it hard for fire trucks to make left turns onto Second Street.

"I'm sure they could design the road to make it easier, but anytime day or night, Second Street is one of the busiest streets in town," Martin said.

South said the N.C. Department of Transportation would have to be involved if the Second Street property was chosen, but less so with the Elks Lodge property. Martin said he thought a stoplight would be needed on Second Street.

Town Attorney Gary Vannoy said the option on the Second Street property, if acquired, would likely be for six months. Commissioner Debbie Ferguson suggested looking into other options during this time.

One option Ferguson suggested was the Melody Square Mall property, which borders Main and Sixth streets and the Central Business District Loop.

Board members agreed by consensus to have South ask an architect to review the suitability of the two-acre Melody Square property, owned by businessman Scott Nafe.

"We owe it to the citizens to examine every option that we can," Ferguson said.