



Big Hollow rejects bid for vacant property

By Lee Filas | Daily Herald Staff

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Big Hollow school officials have rejected a bid for the purchase of their vacant school property in Fox Lake.

But officials aren't worried about selling the 10-acre parcel at the busy intersection of Route 12 and Big Hollow Road. Board vice president Jan Carsella said because of Illinois laws governing the sale of school property, potential developers didn't have enough time to put bid packages together.

And now that officials have met the obligations set by the state, they can move forward using a broker to sell the land.

Carsella said, while 16 bid packages were solicited, only one bid was turned in. That offer was for \$842,000, well under the \$5 million asking price.

She said most of the potential bidders said they didn't have the time needed to pursue the property under the time restrictions imposed by the state. School districts have 60 days from the time the board declares a property unnecessary until the district must either accept or deny bids.

Carsella said the problem is that, due to paperwork and other issues surrounding the sale of a property of this size in prime commercial areas, the district really only had 30 days to solicit bids and complete a sale.

Because the right buyer did not come out of the initial bid round, the district has the right to solicit potential developers through the use of a broker. Carsella said the board has opted to move forward independently for now, but may decide to bring in some help at the Oct. 15 board meeting.

"When it occurs, the sale of the old campus will bring the district an infusion of revenue that will improve our financials for the short term," she said. "But, the long-term need for additional revenues is still critical."

The Big Hollow School District 38 has been having money troubles since failing to get two referendums passed in 2006. Four tax-increase proposals have failed over the last five years.

This year, the district is being forced to pull about \$3 million in short-term loans to cover district bills until tax money can be claimed in June 2008.

The district has pulled similar loans for \$1.2 million in 2005 and \$1.8 million in 2006.

District officials also tried to cut programs prior to the start of this school year, but limited the cuts after parents protested.

The district has announced that officials will go out for a referendum in 2008 to help fund school programs. The board has not decided how much the district will seek on the Feb. 5, 2008, ballot.

The district has also warned that cuts would take place if the referendum isn't approved next year.