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LY Frost	**March 10, 2008**	**4136**

County agrees to finance $1 million for the Highlands Transfer Station

By Colin McCandless, Reporter

The Macon County Board of Commissioners passed a unanimous motion at their Feb. 11 meeting approving the interlocal agreement with the Town of Highlands that will allow the Highlands Transfer Station construction process to begin.

Commissioners held a public hearing on the Highlands Transfer Station last Monday to get comments on the financing of debt, but no citizens signed up to speak on the issue.

County manager Jack Horton said that in order to build the station, to be located off Rich Gap Road, the county would need to borrow $1 million to pay for the county's part of the project. The Town of Highlands will cover the remaining approximately $500,000 needed to complete the facility.

The current construction/ demolition landfill in Highlands will close June 30. The new transfer station will be used to collect municipal solid waste and construction/demolition waste in Highlands, which will be transported to the Macon County Landfill off Lakeside Drive in Franklin.

Horton said the commissioners needed to finalize financing in order to proceed with construction in March and finish the transfer station by July. The Town of Highlands unanimously voted last week to approve the transfer station agreement in concept.

The contract will be funded through the Solid Waste Enterprise fund, which receives no tax dollars.

County finance director Evelyn Southard said the term of financing will be either five or seven years, and they will do an analysis to determine which is best.

Commissioners also unanimously passed a resolution approving the financing agreement and a reimbursement resolution pertaining to the Highlands Transfer Station.

Library to receive funding for new awnings

The Board of Commissioners voted to approve expenditures for improvements to the Macon County Library off Siler Road, during their Feb. 11 meeting.

In his report to commissioners, library board of trustees chairman Randolph Bulgin requested an appropriation of $7,500 for new aluminum awnings at the library, a figure based on a preliminary cost estimate.

These canopies will be located over the exterior doors in five locations on the northern side of the building

The purpose of the awnings is to provide cover for all exterior doors to help protect the interiors immediately inside the doors.

Additionally, they will serve to allow shipping and receiving operations to take place without damage to packages and other materials.

Bulgin said that if it rains and they have to haul books for the "Tales for Tots" program, they currently must carry them in the rain since there is no cover.

The awnings were not included in the original design of the new library, so are not in the scope of the work to be completed by the contractor.

So far the library has received one bid, and has requested two additional bids for the project.

Commissioner Brian McClellan said he realized they were addressing shortcomings in the original design, but wanted to know whether the awnings would detract from the aesthetics of the library.

Bulgin said the architect developed the specifications for the canopies to ensure that the overall design and appearance complements the existing building.

Commissioner Ronnie Beale asked if the library had satisfied liability issues concerning falling ceiling planks.

Bulgin said that county manager Jack Horton has met with the architect and contractor and this particular problem and other issues such as leaks have been or are being addressed.

As an additional safety measure, they have put in molding that should prevent any reoccurrence of falling ceiling planks.

The library had been experiencing problems with water coming in under the doors as well, but Bulgin said it has been addressed by refitting the doors.

Beale asked county finance director Evelyn Southard whether money is available in the library fund to pay for the canopies. Southard said that there are enough funds to cover the project.

Horton requested approval of a budget amendment and authorization to obtain bids and enter into a contract for the project.

The Board voted unanimously to approve funds for the library awnings.

SCC expansion plans move forward

Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the concept of new expansion at Southwestern Community College's Macon campus on Siler Road.

SCC president Dr. Cecil Groves, has requested funding help from the county to add another building to their Macon campus as a result of continued growth in both the early college high school and community college.

A state bond issue isn't planned until 2010 and construction on new buildings from this financing couldn't likely begin until 2011 or 2012.

Groves has said another building would allow the SCC to make the transition over the next three to five years and accommodate their growing enrollment.

It would also allow them to expand the degree programs they offer and increase lab space for classes. The school has seen an increase in requests for medical and technical programs.

The college is looking at constructing a General Steel building that would be designed to match the exterior aesthetic of the current Macon Campus and

Macon County Library buildings.

The next step in the process is submitting a Request For Qualifications for an architect, which county attorney Lesley Moxley said is required by General Statutes.