

Board of Education

ACTION

TITLE: Consider Release of Land Needed for Highway 255 Widening Project

DATE: February 18, 2019

RESPONSIBLE ADMINISTRATOR: Dr. Terry Morawski
Deputy Superintendent

BACKGROUND/CONSIDERATIONS:

The Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority (FCRA) has received notice from the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) that it is beginning the appraisal process for the acquisitions of necessary rights-of-way for the Highway 255 widening and relocation project. As part of that project, ARDOT was asked to relocate the northern end of Wells Lake Road due to safety concerns. FCRA reports that ARDOT was not willing to install a traffic light where the current Wells Lake Road would intersect Highway 255. The line of sight is very poor there, causing concern about the safety of people trying to enter Highway 255 from Wells Lake Road. ARDOT is willing to relocate Wells Lake Road to a location that would provide for a safer intersection. The piece of property that ARDOT is requesting is about 0.69 acres and runs through the northeast corner of the property that FCRA has reserved for Fort Smith Public Schools. Please see the drawing with the attached letter.

A representative of FCRA plans to meet with the appraiser when he inspects the property. FCRA has an agreement with ARDOT that the value of any property acquired from FCRA would be credited toward the \$2 million commitment FCRA has made to assist with the cost of this project. When FCRA receives the official acquisition request from ARDOT, it will have to be presented to the FCRA board for approval. But first, FCRA has asked if Fort Smith Schools will release this property in order for FCRA to convey it to ARDOT in order to provide for a safer intersection for the public.

Another issue is that if FCRA conveys the strip of land required by ARDOT, this will create a roughly one or more acre, triangular island between the current location of Wells Lake Road & the new location. FCRA has requested that Fort Smith Schools release the entire northeast corner from the western side of the proposed new location of Wells Lake Road over to the western side of the current Wells Lake Road location.

The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education (ACHE) currently borders the east side of Wells Lake Road. If Fort Smith Public Schools releases that corner, ACHE has a first right of refusal to purchase it from FCRA. This transfer would mean that ACHE property would still border Wells Lake Road on the east side.

FCRA does not know how long the appraisal & acquisition process will take. They have contacted the district about the request and have asked for release of that portion of the land.

RECOMMENDATION:

The administration recommends that the Board authorize the superintendent to convey the .69 acres needed for the right of way of the new route of Highway 255 to FCRA so that it can be conveyed to ARDOT. The administration also recommends that the Board authorize the superintendent to convey the roughly one-acre triangular island between the current location of Wells Lake Road and the new location of Highway 255.

If the Board agrees, the motion would read: ***move to authorize the superintendent to execute the conveyance of the .69 acres of the Chaffee property identified in the attached map for the right of way needed for the widening of Highway 255 and the roughly one-acre triangular island between the current location of Wells Lake Road and the new location of Highway 255.***