

VBH BOT FYI Planning

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Algonquin Bypass In Judge's Lap Now
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Bids were opened Friday on the contract to demolish Algonquin's derelict Toastmaster factory and two other structures but it's up to a McHenry County Judge next week how soon bulldozers can begin to make way for a Route 31 bypass around the village.

Super Construction of McHenry had the \$604,000 low bid of four submitted to demolish Toastmaster, the former Prairie Trail Bike Shop buildings and the shuttered Algonquin Roadhouse. However, the Illinois Department of Transportation doesn't own any of those structures yet.

Judge Thomas Meyer isn't scheduled to hear arguments until Aug. 11 on IDOT's motion for the Circuit Court to award IDOT title to properties in the way of the bypass. The state filed an eminent domain lawsuit against property owners July 22 and moved Thursday to transfer title to the state even if wrangling about price isn't settled.

IDOT acquisition engineer Jose Rios Told FEN Friday he couldn't reveal details about an open case but said that in some instances eminent domain proceedings end up being largely a formality if property owners and IDOT have managed to come to financial terms. Such an agreement is rumored for the Algonquin Roadhouse but FEN was unable to contact its owner.

Toastmaster's owner, Freeport businessman John Zajicek told FEN Friday he didn't intend to contest title transfer. "This has dragged on too long. Let's get (the bypass) done," he said. Zajicek said he was willing to argue with IDOT about how much the property was worth even while the wrecking ball was swinging, indeed, even after it was done.

Paul Sturznickel, owner of the property south of Toastmaster, told FEN he still thinks the bypass is a bad idea and IDOT hasn't offered to pay him enough money, anyway. He said, "we had agreed upon a number but (my attorney) picked up a discrepancy in the square footage." Sturznickel said Friday he hasn't made up his mind yet whether he'll fight the title transfer.

Friday's bids were only to knock down and cart off the three biggest buildings on the bypass' path. The contract doesn't include digging up and replacing soil the Illinois EPA says is contaminated under Toastmaster and some of Sturznickel's property. That will be a separate project up for bid later.

In the pic: Neighbors called police to Algonquin's woeful Toastmaster factory several weeks ago when they heard kids trying to smash down walls inside.
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