

A GATEHOUSE NEWSPAPER

JournalStar

SERVING CENTRAL ILLINOIS SINCE 1855

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 24, 2010

\$1.00

pjstar.com

Council signs off on Westlake upgrade

Peoria shopping center will be allowed to install larger digital sign

BY JOHN SHARP
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

PEORIA — A new digital and decorative sign will be allowed at Westlake Shopping Center in Northwest Peoria.

The City Council approved the sign with a 10-1 vote Tuesday, allowing a 42.5-foot-high structure to replace the existing 39-foot-high sign.

The sign is larger than what the city's ordinances allow of 25-foot-high signs that are 285 square feet in overall size. Besides exceeding the height, the proposed sign would measure more than 600 square feet.

But the visual upgrade of the shopping center's sign was noted by 4th District City Councilman Bill Spears.

"When I looked at this sign, it's a choice of leaving the sign as is or turning around and looking at an improvement in this area with landscape next to it," Spears said. "It's not an easy decision, but it's a decision that we want to improve this area. ... We want to keep this a very viable commerce area."



RENDERING COURTESY OF COHEN DEVELOPMENT CO.

This rendering shows a new proposed sign at Westlake Shopping Center. The sign will be 42.5 feet tall and will have a digitalized feature.

At-large City Councilman Gary Sandberg, the only "No" vote, opposed the sign's size and its lighted face.

"It's not conducive with quality middle-class Peoria family values," Sandberg said in reference to passionate comments Spears made last week regarding the city's comprehensive plan outlying the future land uses of the city.

Sandberg added, "Signs do two purposes, they identify the

location or serve the impulse. I don't think we need a bigger sign to blink to do either."

An updated sign is considered important in attracting a new, undisclosed tenant to the shopping center at the site that was once Circuit City. An announcement on that tenant could be coming soon.

In other council matters:

■ The council voted unanimously on a \$274,777 agreement with MACTEC Engineering

to provide further consulting services on the mediation of the city's combined sewer overflows problem.

This is the fourth contract with the company as it continues to formulate a plan that will eventually be submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It will be up to the federal government to determine how much the city will have to spend on the problem.

A rough estimate has the entire project costing anywhere between \$100 million to \$300 million.

■ With no discussion, the council approved shifting \$451,815 from a project on University Street to the construction costs of Northmoor Road.

Northmoor will be expanded from two lanes to three, with a bike path on one side and sidewalks on the other. The total project will extend from Knoxville to Allen Road, although a \$2.3 million expense will strictly pay for the section from Knoxville to Sheridan.

The city has said the portion from Sheridan to University will be built in 2012.

John Sharp can be reached at 686-3282 or jsharp@pjstar.com