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Council agrees to city operation of train depot

By JIMMY ISAAC

Friday, April 10, 2009

The City Council signed its part of the deal. Once Union Pacific Railroad Co. signs the contract, Longview will own a train depot.

The council committed to an agreement with the railroad company Thursday. The pact conveys the 9,300-square-foot depot to Longview and leases the property beneath the depot to the city for 20 years at a total cost of \$125,840. That amount must be paid by Oct. 31.

Longview plans to refurbish the depot into a multimodal transportation center for freight and passenger rail, bus and shuttle service at a central location. City administrators want to pursue federal and state grants to pay for the refurbishment.

Joy Smith, spokeswoman for Amtrak — which provides passenger rail service from the depot — praised the city for reaching an agreement with Union Pacific within less than one year. Other cities such as Marshall and Poplar Bluff, Mo., waited more than a decade before acquiring ownership of their rail facilities.

"Union Pacific understands the importance of the Longview depot to the local community and is pleased with the progress that has been made towards an agreement, which will help preserve this historic structure for future generations," said Raquel Espinoza, Union Pacific spokeswoman.

In another matter, the council accepted a \$650,855 bid from Longview Bridge and Road to perform erosion control upgrades at three Longview parks.

The projects, approved by voters in the 2007 Capital Improvement Projects bond package, calls for constructing a 500-linear-foot concrete bag wall at Timpson Park and 1,800 feet of creek bank stabilization at Akin Park. Some work is also planned for Hinsley Park.



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