

Exhibit 1 to Complaint

8/12/2019

Auction for Picasso model extended; \$20K bid still in play | Lake County News | nwitimes.com

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/auction-for-picasso-model-extended-k-bid-still-in-play/article_af1fd0c3-0c2c-5c5d-87a1-2c3f6199a063.html

URGENT

Auction for Picasso model extended; \$20K bid still in play

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GARY — The city school district is extending an online auction for a historically significant wooden Picasso model in its possession.

The presumed-winning \$20,000 bid last month by a Belgium art collector is still in play. The move to extend the auction until Feb. 28 comes after Gary school officials discussed the sell-off process with Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson.

“The auction is being extended for an additional 30 days. The previous bid is still in play. We are extending this after consultation and collaboration with the mayor,” Gary Community School Corp.’s deputy chief of staff Amy Marsh said.

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In recent weeks, 1st District Gary City Councilwoman Rebecca Wyatt — a private attorney who chairs the council's art, culture and history committee — raised concerns about whether Indiana law was followed in an email to Freeman-Wilson and Emergency Manager Peter Morikis.

"Well, when I heard that it was sold, I sent an email to the mayor and (Morikis) and asked did you follow the procedure? And I put the Indiana statute in there just as a heads up. The next thing I knew they cancelled the sale and set it up again," Wyatt said.

The cash-strapped school district has auctioned off several art collection pieces, equipment and unused supplies in recent months as part of the state-appointed emergency management team's plan to shore up the district's coffers, pay down its debt and put the schools on better financial footing.

"The residents did not create this problem on their own. This is tax caps, the (influx of) charter schools, this is policy decisions all across the board," Wyatt said. "This is a post-industrial city, and it's not our fault. To strip away our history is stripping away our dignity."

The 2017 state takeover law required the school district to give 30-day written notice to the city's mayor before property is sold. In this case, Freeman-Wilson was provided notice, but not an itemized list.

The itemized list is not necessarily required under state statute, but Freeman-Wilson said she and Morikis "wanted to achieve the letter and spirit of the statute."

After the final installation of the "Chicago Picasso," the original model — given to American Bridge at Gary Works to sculpt the "Chicago Picasso" — went into storage and was later given to the Gary Community School Corp. in 1970, according to the Kraft Auction Service website, the company hired by the district to advertise and auction the school's collections.

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The nearly 16-foot-tall piece was not created by Picasso, but approved by the artist himself as a model for the Chicago sculpture.

Jonathan Kraft, owner of Kraft Auction Service, said the piece suffered abuse and damage over the years and requires restoration to bring it back to its original form.

The decision to auction off art pieces was met with criticism last year from residents, local history buffs and art enthusiasts.

Chicago sculptor Emory P. Seidel's bronze statue of prized educator William A. Wirt received immense interest when it was listed for auction this summer, sparking public outcry over concerns it should be donated to a local museum, and not publicly auctioned.

Ultimately, Ron Cohen, a retired IUN professor and historian of Gary schools, was the highest bidder and donated the piece to the Calumet Regional Archives.

“Somebody had to pay close to \$7,000 just to buy back our history,” Wyatt said.

The city and school district are hosting a meeting Feb. 27 at West Side Leadership Academy to hear from the public about ways to improve the process.

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Picasso model nets \$20,000 for Gary schools

If you go

The city and school district are hosting a joint meeting 6 p.m. Feb. 27 at West Side Leadership Academy to discuss the sell-off process for historically significant art pieces.



Snafu extends Picasso auction yet again; Community forum set for tonight

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"This is about our kids": Gary emergency manager vows students are his priority above district art auctions

Lauren Leone-Cross

Northlake County Reporter

Lauren covers North Lake County government, breaking news, crime and environmental issues for The Times. She previously worked at The Herald-News in Joliet. She holds a master's degree in Public Affairs Reporting.