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Vigo County Commissioners seek timely presentation of school facilities recommendation

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. — The Vigo County Board of Commissioners is asking for the opportunity to present the completed recommendation of the Vigo County Oversight Board at the Vigo County Council's Sept. 1 meeting so council members can review the findings and move the process toward a decision.

The Oversight Board was established to independently evaluate the Vigo County School Corp.'s long-term facilities plan and determine whether Vigo County could responsibly provide financial support while protecting taxpayers.

Over approximately eight months, the board held 19 public meetings, reviewed multiple facility scenarios, examined long-term county finances, consulted financial professionals and heard from business leaders and community stakeholders. County Council members and the public had the opportunity to attend those meetings and follow the board's work throughout the process.

Following that review, the Oversight Board publicly presented its recommendation and later presented its findings to the Vigo County Commissioners, who voted 3-0 to move the recommendation forward.

"This process was designed to take the time necessary to review the options, understand the financial impact and identify a responsible path forward," said Commissioner Mark Clinkenbeard. "Now that the Oversight Board has completed its work and we have acted on its recommendation, we are asking for the opportunity to present those findings to the County Council in a timely manner, as we committed to doing for this community."

The Oversight Board recommended fully renovating West Vigo High School and constructing a new high

school east of the Wabash River. The recommendation is intended to preserve West Vigo, modernize educational opportunities, reduce long-term operating costs and create a more sustainable school facility footprint.

The commissioners recognize the County Council's responsibility as the fiscal body of county government to review the recommendation, ask questions and determine whether the county will make the proposed financial commitment.

"Timely consideration does not mean a rushed decision," Mike Morris, president of the Vigo County Board of Commissioners, said. "Nineteen public meetings and eight months of work have brought us to this point. Presenting the completed findings gives the County Council the information it needs to ask questions, evaluate the recommendation and determine how the county moves forward."

The Oversight Board also concluded that delaying decisions increases future costs and that maintaining the status quo is no longer financially sustainable.

"We made a commitment to the community to see this process through responsibly," Commissioner Chris Switzer said. "We would not be fulfilling that responsibility if completed work were allowed to sit without being presented. The Oversight Board has completed its work, the commissioners have acted, and the next step is to bring those findings before the County Council so the process can continue toward a decision."

The Vigo County Board of Commissioners remains committed to working with the County Council, Vigo County School Corp. and community partners as the recommendation moves forward.

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