

Council backs plan for homeless shelter in Port

By KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHRM

Ozaukee Press staff

Port Washington officials on Tuesday voiced their support for a homeless shelter planned for the city's south side.

"I believe this is a very noble cause to serve a real need," Ald. Deb Postl said.

Ald. Dan Benning concurred, noting the need for such a facility is great.

"I'm anxious and excited to see it come to life," he said.

Representatives of Family Promise of Ozaukee County, which has been operating locally since 2015, gave city officials an overview of their plans to create the shelter at a former day care center at the corner of Sunset Road and Highway 11.

The shelter would house as many as 20 people at a time, Family Promise Chief Executive Officer Kathleen Christenson Fisher said.

"We're not talking about hundreds of people," she said, calling the shelter "a much needed facility in Ozaukee County...to get

■ Aldermen praise efforts of agency that intends to turn former day care center into a facility for those in need situation that continues.

Family Promise then learned of a community development block grant coronavirus program and, because it needed a governmental partner to apply for a grant, approached Ozaukee County.

They sought a \$1.9 million grant, Christenson Fisher said, and were ultimately awarded \$1.8 million to acquire a building, renovate it and operate the shelter for one year.

Family Promise would own and operate the facility, which is required by the grant to operate for seven years, Christenson Fisher said.

Family Promise plans to acquire the former day care center and renovate it, adding two wings of about 800 square feet each. Two suites for program participants would be in each wing, and another four suites in the central part of the building.

"This is not a drop-in shelter," Shelter

manager Paul Bissett said, "This is a program."

Those housed at the shelter would be there for 30 days, and must participate in weekly case management meetings aimed at helping them, he said.

All services for the families would be offered at the facility, he noted.

Port was chosen as the site for the facility in part because the services for clients are in the city, Christenson Fisher said. Family Promise is also headquartered in Port and there are jobs and other resources for clients.

The new shelter would not be a congregate facility, she noted, but instead have units that have bedrooms with bunk beds, a kitchenette and bathroom where people would stay.

Family Promise has worked with Ozaukee County Sheriff's Lt. DeMaine Milbach to do a security assessment, Bissett said.

Family Promise has not yet made an offer on the property, he noted.

The agency would like to acquire the property as soon as possible, Fisher said, with the goal of opening the shelter in early 2022.

"I appreciate the mission you folks are taking on," Ald. Paul Neumyer said following the presentation.

Mayor Ted Neitzke concurred, saying that Family Promise is an agency that treats its clients with dignity, offering a helping hand to lift "really good people who are in a tight spot. It's a boost and a support."

"However we can help you move forward, we will."

