

River walk group seeks \$160,000 in city contributions

By GREG WEES

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A group aiming to develop the North Fork River corridor through downtown Norfolk is asking the city for \$80,000 in each of the next two years.

The \$160,000 contribution would go toward raising \$330,000 for the project. J. Paul McIntosh, a representative of the NorthFork Development Foundation, told the City Council's Finance Committee at its meeting Monday morning.

Money raised would be used for three purposes, said Jim Miller, the former Norfolk mayor who heads the foundation's board.

They are to hire HDR Engineering of Omaha to work with the city and steering committee to come up with a master plan, promote the project to investors and provide a match for other grant opportunities, Miller said.

"We believe now is the time to take advantage of growing community support," Miller said. "You have the opportunity to change the landscape for future generations."

McIntosh said that with a labor shortage looming, young professionals will be looking to amenities in a community in deciding whether to move to town.

"Perhaps the ambiance of the river walk will make a difference to young professionals to locate here," he said, adding, "It's up to us to be visionaries for the next generation."

The foundation was formed last year to create a recreation, residential, entertainment and retail business corridor along the three-mile river stretch between the Norfolk Country Club and the new Nicor Detailing Center under construction.

The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District has pledged \$25,000 to the effort. As of last May, more than \$54,000 had been raised, according to the foundation.

Miller, who has been making presentations to community groups, described his recent talk before members of the Eagles Club.

They agreed to contribute either \$250 or \$500 toward the effort, he said.

Councilmen Karl Reeder and Dave Fauss commended the group's effort. Councilman

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JIM MILLER

FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

Ivan Van Dyke said the request would be considered, but that there are many demands on the city's funds.

Mayor Gordon Adams asked for details of how the city's funds would be used, and Miller reiterated his statement about the three purposes for the money.

"We have multiple people with hands out with many good causes," the mayor said. "We'll do our best to make a reasonable and appropriate decision."

The council also heard a request for funds to help re-open the Pilger Rest Area along Highway 275, which was closed by Stanton County in January because the county didn't want to bear the expense of maintaining it.

Roland Jensen of Pilger, a member of the advisory board attempting to re-open the rest area, didn't ask for a specific dollar amount from Norfolk. But he said Norfolk had contributed \$4,000 when the state sold the 10-acre rest area to Stanton County.

Jensen said it costs less than \$15,000 annually to keep the rest area open, including daily bathroom maintenance, mowing and electricity costs.

He said Stanton County would like to see other counties that benefit from the rest area contribute their fair share.

A non-profit group would be set up to lease the rest area from the county. Plans are either move an old barn to the rest area, and remodel it as a history museum, or build a new barn to function as a museum, he said.

The council also heard a presentation from teachers Sue Burns and Nancy Schwertley, who showed art work done by their students in an effort to encourage the city to adopt a community-widerecyclingprogram.