

Nearly 900 Residents Signed Petitions To Save Historic Roundhouse

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WOOD RIVER - A group of nearly thirty circulators and helpers collected nearly nine hundred signatures to save the historic Roundhouse. One of the circulators, Mary Roberts said, “882 signatures were collected! We feel like we are making a difference and we don’t want to be dismissed by the city anymore.

“Many of us couldn’t believe our ears after hearing that city officials signed and submitted a grant application that included pictures detailing the removal of the Roundhouse when we were told that there had not been a decision made yet!” Roberts stated.

The larger construction project included plans to build a new recreation center on the vacant lot where the once famous Wood River Aquatic Center stood. Plans for a new recreation center without a pool are now underway.

Bill Dettmers, a Wood River resident, said, “I discovered the plans, signed by the mayor and several other city officials, to demolish the Roundhouse with a FOIA request to both the City of Wood River and the IDNR. Both FOIA responses revealed the same plan to remove the historic Roundhouse. Petition signers couldn’t believe the City would do this. Many of them wondered why they (the City) tore down the pool in the first place.”

Another Wood River resident, Jeremy Plank, who is a CPA and Certified Fraud Examiner said, “Earlier this summer city officials said they had no plans to borrow the unfunded portion of the \$8 million estimated cost of a new recreation center. Then in July, just one month later, a plan to borrow was presented to do just that.”

Plank said, “What are reasonable folks supposed to believe? There were no final plans to remove the pool, until they voted to tear it down. They sent plans to the IDNR that included demolition of the Roundhouse. Now they want to turn it into a gazebo. Then they said there were no plans to borrow money. Now they say borrowing money is the way to go. I said in June that I wouldn’t be surprised if the city pivoted on this as a way to suggest that saving the historic Roundhouse was their plan all along. Here we are. Watching that pivot unfold.”

Roberts encouraged people to stay engaged and attend the City Council meetings as this is just the beginning. Once the petitions are certified this month, the question will be on the ballot for Wood River voters on November 3, 2020.

“Just over a thousand voters voted on the 1% sales tax hike related to this construction. Almost 900 signers on this petition is almost 90% of that total. That should signal to the city that voters aren’t happy with its plans to build a Rec Center at this time – the citizens of Wood River would like to see new water lines, sewers, sidewalks, and streets,” Roberts said.