



Alton Mayor Publicly Supports Community Center Proposal, Announces Committee To Work Out Details

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Riverbender Community Center Volunteer Executive Director John Hentrich has presented a proposal to the City Of Alton and its Aldermen for consideration. Hentrich's proposal is to donate all of the Riverbender Community Center assets, inventory, furnishings, equipment, games, computers, and cash reserves to the City of Alton with the understanding that the Park and Recreation Department will operate and provide similar services to teens in the existing facility located at 200 W. 3rd Street. As a part of this proposal, Hentrich and existing board members, as well as many volunteers will stay on to help the city with this transition.

The Riverbender Community Center is a 15,000 square foot facility in Downtown Alton that has been serving the community since 2010. Hentrich said "... It has been enjoyed by tens of thousands of visitors over the years and we have had hundreds of successful events for people of all ages." He continued to say that "...although it has been very

tiring at times, overall it has been a wonderful, and very rewarding experience. Just like the teens have, as a volunteer I've made friends and built relationships that will last a lifetime."

At the conclusion of the Alton City Council Meeting on Wednesday, August 11, 2021, Mayor David Goins stepped up to publicly announce on record that he is in full support of this proposal and that he would establish a committee to study the details of the proposal so that any concerns could be addressed.

The replacement cost of the assets and the cash reserves are in excess of a quarter of a million dollars. To make it clear, the Community Center proposal does not in any way involve the Riverbender.com media business operation or the Riverbender Tech Center computer store.

Hentrich said the key reason for formulating this proposal is simple: "For most of my life I have had two or three jobs and as I get older I would like to get to a point where I have just one. I'd like to put a little more focus on my family and on my core business Riverbender.com. I'd like to see the city take what we have built over the last 10 years and make it even better. I believe the opportunities are limitless and the need to take care of our youth and others in our community is incredibly important." Hentrich went on to say "the work of countless volunteers, small businesses, and donors has paved the way for an easy transition for the City of Alton."

The following video which is on the community center's website was made a few years ago as part of an application for the small business revolution grant. It gives you an idea of the events that have taken place there and the mission of the non-profit organization.

For the safety of its visitors and the volunteers, the community center has been closed since COVID-19 hit hard in early 2020.

Hentrich says the timeline on this is very important. "Like any business, you have to be open in order to stay in business. You can't close for an extended period of time and expect reserves to last forever." **The Community Center Board has a goal of a Grand Re-Opening on September 10th, 2021, shortly after the kids go back to school.**

Hentrich concluded with "It is our hope to get the kids back to the center as soon as possible. They've had enough disappointments last year due to the pandemic and missed out on so many learning and social opportunities."

More information about the community center can be found at: www.RiverbenderCommunityCenter.org

Video broadcast from Wednesday, August 11th, 2021, Alton City Council Meeting.

