

Freeholder faults plan to buy Don Bosco facility

By PATTY PAUGH

Scrapping construction of Sussex County's stalled judicial and administrative complex in Newton will emerge as one of the county's costliest blunders, a freeholder has charged.

Nicholas Masi maintained that little if any savings would be realized by buying a structure at Don Bosco College for \$4.2 million and building a smaller courthouse in lieu of constructing the complex.

Last month, the freeholders unanimously opted to pursue acquisition of the Don Bosco building and development of a 40,000-square-foot courthouse on High Street next to the jail, rather than proceeding with construction of the judicial and administrative complex.

But Masi charged last week that the approach will cost nearly \$20 million. His breakdown includes \$8 million for a new courthouse, \$2 million for the reused architectural plans, \$2 million for a parking garage he believes will be needed and \$8 million to buy and renovate at Don Bosco.

At that rate, he said, the 30-year-old Don Bosco building will cost about \$200 per square foot to acquire and remodel.

"I don't think there's a respectable businessman in Sussex County who would pay \$200 a square foot or close to that for that building. It's not worth it," he said.

But Freeholder Michael LaRose insisted Masi was either deliberately misrepresenting the figures or misunderstanding them. He said it would cost

Masi sees little savings for Sussex in purchase of seminary building

about \$120 per square foot to buy and renovate Don Bosco, a figure he called well within the range of reasonable construction costs.

For that amount of money, the county also will acquire 12 adjoining acres that it can use for parking.

LaRose said the total package, including the courthouse and acquisition of Don Bosco, should cost no more than \$14 million, far less than the \$30 million the complex would have cost to build and furnish. His estimate was based on \$6 million to buy and convert Don Bosco, \$6 million for a new courthouse and \$2 million for general fees and contingencies.

Citing the advantages of the latest building approach, LaRose said the county will obtain office and judicial space more quickly for less money.

Freeholder Director Victor Marotta reiterated his support for the county's new direction.

But Sussex County Administrator Donald Cluxton said the architect's rough estimates of renovation costs ranged between \$1 million and \$2.2 million, depending on the scope of work done. Marotta added the cost could increase to \$3.1 million if the exterior of the building is refurbished.

Masi said questions about his colleagues' plans arose in his mind after he reviewed the report of Sparta archi-

tect Richard Wilson on the cost of renovating Don Bosco.

He contended Wilson determined it would cost \$3.5 million to convert the seminary hall and chapel to administrative office space. The county already leases a portion of the structure.

Under the more modest plan, he said the entire 44,000-square-foot building would be overhauled, including new carpeting, heating, office lighting, ceilings, wiring and painting.

Cluxton said the more expensive plan also called for extensive renovations to the existing gymnasium, which would be transformed into two floors of offices and used as a main entrance. Under this proposal, the county would obtain a total of 50,000 square feet of office space in the building, he added.

The freeholders still have not decided on the amount of renovations to be undertaken in the structure.

Despite the different interpretations of the architect's calculations, Masi said he still would try to convince his colleagues to proceed with development of the judicial and administrative complex. That project would cost the county less money in the long run because there would be fewer facilities to operate and lower maintenance costs, he said.

In addition, Masi said building the

complex would accommodate all the county's parking needs. That structure called for the construction of a subterranean parking garage, including some 360 spaces.

But LaRose argued the county's new building approach would provide abundant parking. Since the courthouse would be smaller than the complex, he said more cars could be parked on the site.

Many cars that currently park there also would be relocated to Don Bosco because some county offices would be shifted there, Cluxton added. In addition, he said vacant land at Don Bosco would provide parking for up to 500 cars.

Despite the change in the county's building plans, LaRose said a new courthouse could be designed and completed within two years.

The freeholders are expected to select an architectural firm for the work Sept. 20.

Sussex County Bar Association President Brian Laddey said he personally supports the freeholders' new direction because they have agreed to provide facilities in the proposed courthouse needed by lawyers and the public. But he said the bar has not yet taken a formal stand on the new approach.

Besides building a new courthouse, the freeholders also are considering whether to proceed with alterations to the vacant administration building on High Street to include one courtroom. The basement of the structure is expected to be renovated to provide space for the sheriff's department.

Ex-convict accused of abusing teen girl

By KEVIN DILWORTH

A Newark man who was recently released from Trenton State Prison after serving 6½ years of a rape conviction has been arrested in Orange on charges he made terroristic threats against a 14-year-old girl and had sexual contact with her.

Police Director Charles Cobbett said the suspect, Dana Braunskill of Lanark Avenue, Newark, also is being investigated for making threats against at least "40 other females, aged 14 to 34" in Orange and neighboring communities.

Detective Clarence Derricott is credited with helping arrest Braunskill last week, shortly after a teenager telephoned the police and told authorities a man had threatened to kill her and her 5-year-old brother if she did not have sex with him and pose nude, Cobbett said.

The suspect initially telephoned the victim Aug. 30 and identified himself as a radio personality from a station in New York, according to police.

He first spoke to the victim's younger brother to learn his name, age and the name of an older sister, if he indeed had one, Cobbett explained.

When the caller learned the name of the older sister, he asked to speak to her, lied about his identity and told the girl she had just won \$1,000 in a radio contest, he added.

The caller then told the victim to receive the money she had to first give the names, ages and telephone numbers of three girlfriends.

Cobbett said the girl complied, the suspect got the information and then told the 14-year-old she had to pose nude for him.

When the victim refused, the suspect told her the name and age of her younger brother and vowed to kill him and her if she did not comply with his wishes, the police director said.

The girl, "all shook up" about the threat, later agreed to meet the suspect

at Sanford and South Orange avenues in Newark and to bring a similarly aged girlfriend with her, Cobbett said.

When they arrived, the pair waited about 15 minutes until they were approached by an unidentified boy who handed them a handwritten message, Cobbett said.

The message told the girl to tell her girlfriend to leave the area so the suspect could meet and talk with the victim alone, he said, adding the girl did just that and the suspect eventually met her alone and ordered her to walk with him to the second floor of a nearby house on Rockland Avenue.

According to the police director, it was there that the suspect demanded the girl disrobe so he could take nude pictures of her and have sex with her.

The suspect released the girl, Cobbett continued, but a few days later telephoned her at home again, made similar threats on her life and that of her brother and again requested she meet him at Sanford and South Orange avenues.

This time the girl notified police and Derricott, along with Detectives Steve Crompton and James Cullen and Lt. Vincent Piscercia and members of the Newark Police Department, hid in the area and apprehended Braunskill.

The police recovered "a knife, a straight-edge razor, a yellow sheet of paper loaded with the names of about 40 females on it, aged 14 to 34" from Braunskill, Cobbett said.

"And of those 40 names," he added, "nine were Orange residents. The others were from neighboring towns."

Cobbett said authorities have since learned that all of the 40 girls and women on the paper had been contacted by Braunskill.

In addition to the Orange police, the sex crimes unit of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office is investigating Braunskill. Cobbett said Braunskill was released from prison five months ago.

E. Orange shipper jailed

An East Orange businessman has been jailed on charges that he accepted money from customers to ship furniture and other items to Jamaica in the West Indies, and instead kept the money and furniture for himself.

Orange Police Director Charles Cobbett identified the suspect as Joseph Walker, 36, the operator of Sealand Shipping Inc. on South Harrison Street, East Orange.

Walker, who lives in Plainsboro, was arrested by East Orange police on a complaint that he failed to return a \$4,000 truck he rented from a rental firm in Orange, Cobbett said.

The suspect, charged with theft of services and theft by deception, was being held in jail while authorities "conduct an ongoing investigation" into

how many people paid Walker money to ship things that never were delivered, he added.

Cobbett said the police already have found \$6,150 worth of furniture—originally bound for Jamaica—inside a Bayonne warehouse where Walker rented space.

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