



CUTLINE: At the Nov. 2 meeting of the SSCC Board of Trustees, Dr. Kevin Boys (far left), president of Southern State Community College, discusses expansion plans with members of the college’s Board of Trustees: (l-r) Paul Hall of Brown County, Rory Ryan of Adams County and Larry Anderson of Adams County.

Southern State eyes new campus locations

Southern State Community College has moved forward on plans to expand the college’s services by pursuing land acquisition in Adams and Brown counties.

The college’s Board of Trustees approved two resolutions during their Nov. 2 regular meeting—to accept a donation of land in Adams County, and to approve a contract to purchase land in Brown County.

The land in Adams County is a 19-acre parcel located on Moores Road near State Route 32 in Seaman, while the land in Brown County is a 63-acre parcel located at the junction of State Route 32 and Brooks Malott Road in Mt. Orab.

“We knew the board had an interest in expanding into Adams County,” said Dr. Kevin Boys, SSCC president. “Prior to launching into this, we needed to complete an assessment of our current facilities. That led to a detailed facilities assessment by KZF Design, an architectural group in Cincinnati, which identified several needs on all four Southern State campus locations. The most notable and biggest surprise was the revelation that South Campus in Fincastle needed approximately \$3 million in reinvestment to bring the facilities up to present standards.

“That’s what got us thinking about a replacement for our current South Campus as a way to provide more access to more people in Brown County, while still maintaining our focus on expanding into Adams County as well,” he said.

Following the facilities assessment, the college worked with CEBRES, a real estate consultancy firm in Cincinnati, to thoroughly investigate different site possibilities.

In Brown County, the market analysis identified Mt. Orab—specifically the State Route 32/Appalachian Highway area—as the prime location based on population centers and accessibility. In Adams County, the analysis numbers were more evenly distributed among three sites: West Union, Seaman and Peebles. The Seaman site became a compelling choice for numerous reasons: the land had been offered as a donation; it has close proximity to SR 32; and it lies adjacent to Adams County Regional Medical Center, Adams County Cancer Center, Adams County Dialysis Center, and North Adams High School.

“The site in Seaman offers potential partnerships with the local school district, Adams County Regional Medical Center, and other nearby facilities for mutual efficiencies,” said Dr. Boys. “While the market analysis numbers showed three good locations, there could be good synergy for us to be in the Seaman community that’s greater than what the numbers show.”

As for the current SSCC South Campus near Fincastle, Dr. Boys explained that while it will be “unfeasible to continue it as a Southern State campus, we hope to repurpose it for some other community service. As a campus site, it isn’t feasible because of its proximity to Mt. Orab and Seaman. But the building and site could be used for other purposes.

“We have had discussions with government officials about potential uses of the building and site. Furthermore, the South Campus houses the Appalachian Gateway Center and we’d like to seek partnerships in order to keep traditional arts and culture a significant piece of that location. There is the potential to keep Southern State’s art classes on that site. Arts are a crucial part of the college experience and we’re very committed to that.”

Jim Buck, SSCC Vice President of Business and Finance, explained that the financing plan for the campus expansions does not rely on a tuition increase, rather on the projected increase in enrollment once the campuses are open. Construction costs at Mt. Orab are estimated at approximately \$7 million, with the Seaman project coming in at around \$4 million. Buck said that those costs will be financed through the sale of bonds and a major capital campaign.

“Finally, I would like to acknowledge the influence of the late Ben Houser in arriving at tonight’s decision,” said Dr. Boys. “Mr. Houser, who served on the SSCC Board at the time of his passing, was extremely excited about a possible campus relocation to Mt. Orab and equally passionate about his desire to see a campus in Adams County. I’m not sure we would be here tonight without his early involvement.”

ADAMS COUNTY SITE

The Seaman site in Adams County has been offered as a donation by HNL and partners John Condon and Kent Gulley and the donation agreement will be for a period of one year while the college continues to study accessibility, visibility, and programming needs. The arrangement can be extended by mutual agreement.

“I’m excited about the expansion into Adams County. That’s what we’ve been wanting to see for a long time,” said Trustee Larry Anderson who represents Adams County. “I’m a greenhorn on the board, so I really studied the finance reports and I prayed about this move. And I’m one of the most conservative people in the world but I think that, even in these financial times, it can be a good time for community colleges because of the cost basis alone. Students can save so much money and get a good solid education by going to a community college.”

SSCC board member Rory Ryan, who represents Adams County, was one of two votes against the resolution to purchase land in Brown County. Ryan voted in favor of the option agreement to accept the donation of land in Adams County, prior to voting against the purchase and funding proposal.

“First, I would like to reiterate Dr. Boys’ words of appreciation to Mr. John Condon and Mr. Kent Gulley, who offered the gift of real estate to build a college campus near the Adams County Hospital along the Appalachian Highway. Their generosity of this prime location is greatly appreciated.

“My concern with moving ahead on a new Brown County campus reflects upon the Board of Trustees announcement on Oct. 14, 2009, and a subsequent meeting with the Adams County Board of Commissioners that we were pursuing an Adams County campus,” Ryan said. “Adams County has been an integral part of Southern State since its founding 36 years ago, yet remains the only county without a campus. In the past five years, Adams County has had almost 2,000 students enrolled at Southern State, more in fact, than Brown County, by an average of almost 70 students per year. The relocation of South Campus to Mt. Orab will add approximately 25 miles to an Adams County student’s daily commute. These are a few of the concerns I have shared with the board.”

“These concerns notwithstanding, I remain cautiously optimistic that the college will, in due time, take action for an Adams County campus,” Ryan said. “I commend Dr. Kevin Boys and Vice President Jim Buck for all of their considerable efforts and assurances as Southern State Community College begins a new and exciting chapter in being a ‘first choice’ college for Adams, Brown, Clinton, Fayette and Highland counties.”

BROWN COUNTY SITE

The 63-acre Mt. Orab site in Brown County is being offered for \$3.25 million. Southern State’s purchase of this land will require approval by the State Controlling Board in the Ohio Governor’s Office of Budget and Management. An approval packet has been filed and will be presented at the Nov. 14 meeting of the State Controlling Board.

“I’m excited that we’re coming to Mt. Orab and serving an area in Brown County that we haven’t been able to serve in the past because of location,” said Trustee Paul Hall who represents Brown County. “This will be good for Southern State as we expand our borders. Ben Houser was a strong believer in it. He laid the groundwork and we’re starting the completion for him.”

During the Nov. 2 meeting, the Southern State Board of Trustees also passed a resolution to approve a declaration of official intent with respect to reimbursement of temporary advances made for capital expenditures to be made from subsequent borrowings.

This means that approval is given for the college to use existing funds for a cash purchase of the land, and that those funds will be reimbursed back to the college from the future sale of bonds.

“We hope to begin the year-long program/design phase with the architects as early as January 2012,” said Dr. Boys. “The construction phase could take about 18 months, which would position us—at the earliest—to open the Mt. Orab site to students for Fall Semester 2014.”

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