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Frontier Park pavilion could be vetoed

By **Kalen Ponche**
Saturday, December 13, 2008 2:55 AM CST

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Funding to build a large pavilion in Frontier Park is likely to be vetoed by Mayor Patti York at the Dec. 16 meeting of the St. Charles City Council, but her veto could be overturned with eight votes from the council.

Earlier this month, the City Council passed a \$109 million budget for 2009 that included \$200,000 for an open-air pavilion to be built in Frontier Park.

But the proposed pavilion drew criticism from some city residents who said it might obstruct the view of the river. Other people, including York, said the item was an unnecessary expense at a time when gaming revenues are lower than expected. York said Thursday she will probably veto the inclusion of the item in the 2009 budget.

But the council may have the eight votes necessary to overturn a veto from York.

Two council members, Laurie Feldman, Ward 3, and Larry Meunch, Ward 2, voted against including money for the pavilion in the budget. Both have said they would not vote to overturn a veto from York. Councilman Mike Klinghammer, Ward 8, who also voted against funding the project initially, said he is unsure how he would vote.

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"I think there's a lot of opposition to the idea and the idea wasn't fully developed and explained," he said. "It isn't decided how big it would be, where it would be... those questions need to be answered before we entertain or ask the question, 'are we for it or against it?'"

Supporters of the pavilion say it would be a much-needed addition to the park, which is next to the Missouri River.



Councilman Erv Ermeling, Ward 10, said the pavilion could be used by local school children who take field trips downtown and need a place to eat lunch. He also said it could be used by vendors at the festivals held in the park throughout the summer and fall. Festival organizers often spend several thousand dollars renting a large tent.

"It could be made into a nice-looking pavilion where people could enjoy it all year round, not just festivals," Ermeling said. "And this time of the year it'd be neat to have an ice rink under there."

If the funding is kept in the budget, the council would still have to decide the placement, size and design of the structure. Ermeling originally suggested building a pavilion on a concrete slab between the existing train depot and Jaycee stage. The description raised concerns from some residents that placing the pavilion between the stage and depot would ruin the view of the river.

"The park was designed as a passive park to complement the historic district, that's why these folks are against building stuff in it," Muench said.

John Vernitte, of St. Charles, said he goes running or biking in Frontier park often and is reserving judgement on the pavilion plan until he sees what the structure would look like. If it blocks the view of the river, it would take away from the ambiance of old St. Charles, he said.

"I guess I can understand that people become accustomed to Frontier Park the way it is," he said, noting that statues and other additions to the park over the years haven't detracted from the area.

Council members and the mayor also disagree about funding for the project.

York said the city would have to spend about \$348,000 from reserve funds to build the structure.

"I just don't believe we need to go into reserves for these kinds of extra things," York said. "Three hundred thousand dollars, that's three extra policemen on the street."

Some council members pointed out the large reserve funds the city has built up.

Council Member Laurie Feldman, Ward 3, said there are other projects, such as building flood-proof rest rooms in the park that should be completed before the council considers building a pavilion.

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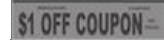
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