

Riley Community Building

First of all, tonight I want to welcome all of you to this introductory meeting of the hoped-for Riley Community Building. I am Kevin Larson, if you did not know. I am a retired schoolteacher having taught History and Government at Riley County High School for 41 years. I have lived in Riley for 48 years, so I can actually say Riley is now my hometown.

Tonight, we have gathered to share information, gather input and ideas from all of you and to let each of you and the community know what we are endeavoring to accomplish. As you can tell, we are endeavoring to see a Community Building built for the City of Riley. Right now, such a facility does not exist. The City of Riley is an orphan with no ready available facility for community activities.

As I view our surrounding communities, most of them have a facility that serves their community well. I find it interesting that when I think of our neighboring towns such as Leonardville, Randolph and Keats, my immediate item of recall is their community building. It is in each of those towns, my point of reference. For us here in Riley, we do not have such a point of reference.

So, I guess, I am saying is that when others think of our town, what is their point of reference? A Community Building where people could meet, hold reunions, have civic gatherings, provide a place for the Senior Citizens to meet, etc. would easily become a point of reference for our community.

As a community, we need such a point of reference. The town of Riley is indeed a unique entity. But, I fear, too often, we are not being fully recognized for who and what we are and have. I think it is interesting that as you drive the highways around our fair city, very few of the highway signs tell how many miles it is to Riley. Leaving Manhattan, we are told how many miles it is to Leonardville and Clay Center. Leaving Junction City, we are told how many miles it is to the Highway 24 Junction and Marysville. Are we being overlooked?

We might be, but if we had a Community Building that would draw events and activities to our town, Riley would become more well known to all who would attend and participate in the sponsored events.

Yes, we do have businesses that draw people to our town, we are part of a renowned school system that is certainly a draw as well, but even with all of those attractions, as a town, we need a facility that would encourage people to come, to stay for a longer visit and to fully come to appreciate all that our town has to offer.

With the proposed location in the city park east of the Riley County Grade School, individuals using the Community Building would have within walking distance, several playgrounds, outdoor picnic facilities, a baseball diamond, a Frisbee golf course, a

swimming pool, and the lure of having all of these amenities without the crush of an enveloping urban environment.

Yes, I could go forever listing the advantages such a Community Building would bring to the City of Riley. I feel the need for such a facility with great fervor.

The need can be said, but to get it accomplished, it is going to take a significant level of involvement by all of us. It will take the active engagement of many to deal with the logistics of size, amenities to be found in the building and assorted other details. However, the greatest opportunity for involvement by all of us is going to be found in helping raise the funds to make the building a reality.

The cost to see this building finished is going to take contributions by one and all. Yes, grants are going to be filed for, a fund has been created through the Riley County Community Foundation and various other ideas for fund raising will be explored, stay tuned for the different activities that will be brought forward.

I am impressed that the desires of all who have been involved with the project so far have stated over and over that this building is not to be funded with increased tax dollars, it will be finished through grants and individual gifts and donations. Thus, it will be a true Community Building.

So, the challenge comes our way. We have an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the City of Riley. We can give the City of Riley a Community Building that will be a unifying entity for the area that will last long into the future.

Hopefully, all of you will accept the challenge to make a lasting impact upon our fair city and to know that in the years to come, our efforts will be long remembered and valued as the Community Building of Riley is used over and over again.

A Community Building in Riley built by our citizenry to be used for years to come would certainly live out one of my favorite passages of scripture in which the Psalmist proclaims, "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." That is my vision, I want my children, grandchildren, and ancestors on down the line to be able to proclaim those words of the Psalmist about us as they use the Community Building that we succeeded in getting built.

Thanks for your attendance here tonight and thanks in advance for all that each of you will do to see a long-held dream become a reality for the City of Riley. Let's get it done.