

Arft presents progress

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Beloit City Manager Larry Arft spoke Monday about the major improvements the city has gone through over the last five year during his annual “Report to the Community.”

Arft said Tuesday morning that the presentation was a little different than in years past. This year he focused on how the city has laid out its five-year growth plan.

Arft broke up the presentation into a few sections that included “Major Public Infrastructure Improvements,” “Downtown,” “Public Institutions” and “Commerce and Industry.”

In 2012 the city completed its Riverside North improvement project, and finished construction on the newly rebuilt Ken Hendricks Memorial Bridge. Pohlman Field also saw major renovations in 2012 and 2013.

The Beloit Snappers and city worked to completely redo the outfield, and bring it level with the infield. Locker rooms and concourse work was delayed by weather in the winter of 2013, but was completed after the baseball season in the fall.

Downtown Beloit also has seen a transformation over the last several years. In 2009, the Fourth Street parking lot reconstruction was completed. Then in 2010, the John Rose Canoe and Kayak Launch was dedicated.

The \$70 million school referendum was the highlight of the renovations currently ongoing at Beloit’s public institutions. The new Beloit Memorial High School pool opened up last year along with several school remodel dedications. In 2009 Beloit College’s Science Center received a Platinum LEED Certification from U.S. Green Building Council for its energy efficiency.

Last year was also big in terms of projects funded by Hendricks Properties. The company announced a multi-million dollar renovation of the Ironworks Building, and continued to work on the Phoenix Project in the downtown area.

In other business, the council reaffirmed the Class “B” Beer and Reserve “Class B” liquor license for The Castle, owned by John and Jody Wittnebel. The Castle at 501 Prospect is the old former First Presbyterian Church. The license was first approved in the summer, but expires after six months if the business is not ready to open at that point. Arft said the council unanimously approved the reaffirmation of the license.

“Obviously we want to help them make this a success,” Arft said on Tuesday morning.

According to the city council packet the Wittnebel's are planning to open the main and lower levels of the building by April 1. The Castle will be host to an arts and music entertainment center.

A bike path won't be built on Bayliss Avenue as part of the resurfacing project for this year and next year. Since the project is partially funded Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Local Road Improvement Project (LRIP), state law requires a bike path, but there are exceptions to the law.

Arft said Tuesday the street has low traffic volumes, and it wouldn't connect to any existing bike path in the city.

"It's a significant issue due to cost, and inconvenience to surrounding residents," Arft said. "Our bike paths tend to connect, but there is no connection up here. It's just a residential neighborhood so there was no good reason to spend the money."