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Commissioners support viaduct

February 7, 2013

By ROBERT A. DEFRANK - Staff Writer , Times Leader

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ST. CLAIRSVILLE - Belmont County Commissioners passed a resolution Wednesday endorsing the efforts and goals of the Great Stone Viaduct Historical Education Society, Inc. The non-profit organization is dedicated to preserving and promoting the structure in Bellaire.

"Belmont County has a very rich history, we all know that, but it's amazing how many people really don't understand a lot about the historically significant structures we have, and one of those is of course the Great Stone Viaduct," said Dan Frizzi Jr., board member, adding that it was placed on the National Register of Historic Structures in 1976 and was recognized by the Ohio Historical Society a few years ago during its marker program. Its marker is on Union Street, at the archstone engraved with the date of commencement in 1870.

Frizzi said the bridge was cleaned up in August in preparation for a recent celebration.

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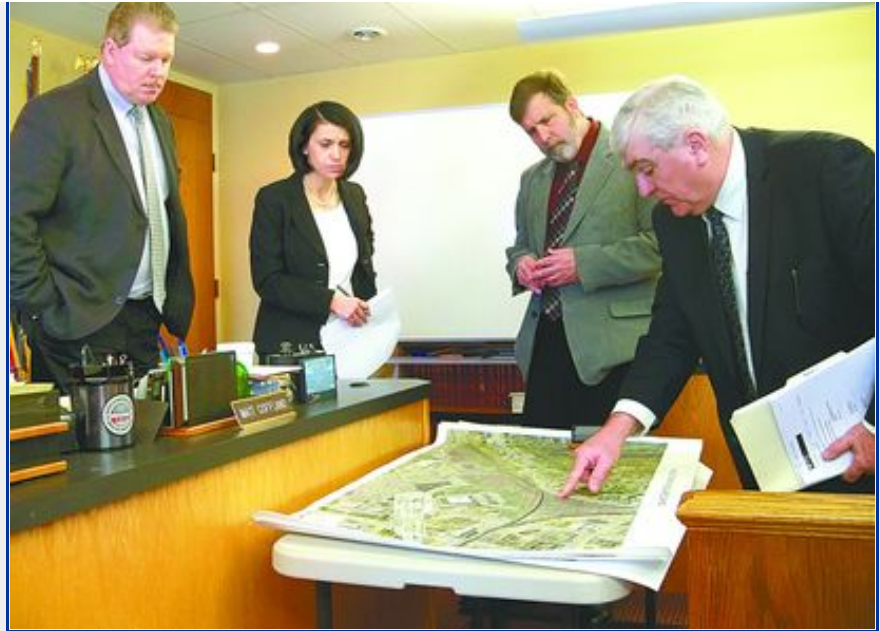


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The bridge is owned by two railroads. They are the CSX Corp. and Wheeling and Lake Erie. Wheeling and Lake Erie owns the portion of railroad that remains active. It is used about twice daily.

The section controlled by CSX is abandoned. Frizzi said his group would like to acquire that portion of the structure and undertake to protect, preserve and develop it for the future enjoyment of railroad enthusiasts and the public.

"Even with it in its deteriorated condition it is still a magnificent structure," he said. "It is something that really does need to be protected and preserved."

He added that Wheeling and Lake Erie is supportive of the project and has facilitated negotiations with CSX. The goal is to acquire the track bed from 26th Street to the intersection with the active rail.

"This is an important project not just for Bellaire or our organization, but as an important project for the entire county," he said, adding that they have a grant writer looking into preliminary costs. They will arrange a survey.

He noted that the 37 ringstone of the arches represent the 37 states of the Union at the time it was built in 1868 by the Central Ohio, Baltimore and Ohio Railroads. The stone arcade commenced in 1870.

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"Our history is one of the very important resources that we have in Belmont County," said Commissioner Ginny Favede, adding that the county's importance to the growing prosperity of the state is the presence of interstate, river and rail. She said the viaduct is an invaluable symbol of the nation's history in its expansion into the west. "The railroad built this nation and I support your efforts in continuing to preserve it."

More information can be found at www.greatstoneviaduct.org

In other matters, commissioners motioned to adopt annual allocation of funds in the amount of \$27,200 from the Belmont County General Fund to the Belmont County Agricultural Society.

Commissioners motioned to approve the purchase of four pick-up trucks for the Belmont County Sanitary Sewer District through the state's cooperative purchasing contract to be used as replacements in their fleet. They include two 2013 GMC Sierra 1500 pick-ups for the water department for a total of \$49,277.40. Also, two Chevrolet Silverado 2500 pick-up trucks for the sewer department for \$52,690.

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