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Wellsville Foundation Created to Build on Community's Heritage

WELLSVILLE, Ohio – The Wellsville Community Foundation has been created with a mission “to contribute to charitable purposes, or conduct activities, for the common good, general welfare and civic benefits of the Wellsville community and its environs.”

Seven individuals have agreed to serve as trustees of the newly formed nonprofit corporation: Attorney Nick Amato; new resident Cressey Belden; County Municipal Judge Tim McNicol; retired executive Eddie Murphy; former banker Peter Russell; retired educator Linda Weekley; and retired executive Robert E. Williamson.

Murphy was elected president, McNicol vice president, Belden secretary, and Weekley treasurer at the foundation's organizational meeting in late December. Russell served as incorporator.

Fundamentally, the organization seeks to induce a public-private partnership with village of Wellsville leadership and welcomes the participation of all community members and businesses.

Russell said the foundation has applied for 501(c)(3) status and will announce when it is ready to receive donations and project ideas.

“For two centuries, Wellsville was a shining example of what hard work, motivation and vision could accomplish in small-town America. That foundation is still present and our goal is to build upon it,” said Weekley.

Pictured at top: Wellsville, Ohio, looking west. Pictured on 1907 postcard for sale on ebay.

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Wellsville Foundation Sees Bank Building as Prime for Redevelopment

WELLSVILLE, Ohio — Adjacent buildings with historical significance to this village may be integral to its economic redevelopment now that the Wellsville Community Foundation owns the structures.

The foundation, formed in 2020 by a group of citizens, held an open house Thursday at the building formerly operated by CF Bank, 601 and 603 Main St. The foundation was given the building, now houses its office there and is making the rest of the space available for development.

Foundation President Eddie Murphy said members of the group began to have conversations a year ago about what they could do to “reboot our beloved community.” Despite the unsettled times surrounding the pandemic, “We did not settle for conversation,” she said.

The foundation was formed in December and obtained its 501(c)3 nonprofit designation in May. Joining Murphy on the board of trustees are county Judge Timothy McNicol, vice president; attorney Nick Amato; Chrissy Belden, treasurer; Linda Weekley, secretary; Peter Russell, incorporator; and Robert Geno Williamson, trustee.

Within its first six months of operation, foundation volunteers initiated a clean-street program, starting at the northern end of town and working their way south. Murphy said the plan is to begin asking residents to help with the project.

In its second six months, the foundation was given the former Central Federal Bank building on Main Street. CF Bank ceased operations in 2013.

The original bank building was constructed in 1892 as the Central Federal Savings & Loan Bank, with the addition erected in 1987. The buildings cover 8,000 square feet that includes 10 enclosed offices, three conference rooms and two open lobbies, all of which the foundation believes lend themselves to economic redevelopment.



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Open house attendees look at the original bank vault in the basement of the historic part of the building, which was constructed in 1892 as the Central Federal Savings & Loan Bank.

The foundation accepted the gift with no restrictions. But, according to Russell, it nearly “chickened out” when members noted damage to the exterior masonry wall.

CF Bank gave the foundation \$5,000 to help to fund an \$18,000 repair bid and Russell announced another \$15,000 was subsequently contributed by the Go Healthy Foundation, which also gave \$2,000 toward painting the wall.

The roofs on are in good shape, according to Russell, who said CF Bank spent \$42,000 to replace them a year ago, although ceiling tiles inside will need to be replaced. With fire doors in place, Russell said he believes the combined buildings could safely be separated into two units.

Russell said the foundation is free to sell, rent or develop the buildings in any way, guided by what uses are identified.

Noting the building has been “embedded in the history of Wellsville since 1892,” Murphy said using the building to promote economic development was “long overdue.”

Mayor Pro Tem Randy Allmon agreed.

“To me this is the greatest little town in the state of Ohio. This is a chance for Wellsville to grow and give something back to the community,” he said.

Allmon offered any help his office can provide and introduced two members of the village council, Karen Dash and Keith Thorn, whom he said are “part of a team down [at Village Hall] that’s remarkable. I never saw a council come together like this. All they have in their hearts is to make Wellsville a better place.”

The open house was co-hosted by the Columbiana County Port Authority and Department of Economic Development.

The executive director of the port authority, Penny Traina, said she is “very appreciative” of the Wellsville Community Foundation’s hard work and efforts.

“I am from Wellsville and there’s no place like home,” Traina added.

Following tours of the building, Murphy encouraged those in attendance to discuss their ideas for reuse of the site.

One suggestion came from village fiscal officer Hoi Wah, who said she would like to see the building transformed into a medical clinic since residents must travel to Jefferson County or into Calcutta for such services.

Wah noted that Wellsville has just one doctor in residence, no dentists and that residents of nearby communities such as Hammondsville and Irondale might also make use of such a clinic.

Former CF Bank building turned over to Wellsville Community Foundation

JUL 24, 2021

WELLSVILLE — The Wellsville Community Foundation (WCF) took ownership of the former CF Bank office building on Main Street last month.

The building, which has not been in full use for a number of years, was given to the non-profit WCF by the bank. The foundation plans to determine the best charitable or non-profit use of the buildings and are soliciting ideas from the community. There will be several open houses held.

“We are honored that CF Bank has entrusted us with this historic building,” said WCF President Eddie Murphy. *“Each effort pursued or adopted will be done in the spirit of community advocacy and advancement.”*

There are seven current trustees of the WCF — Attorney Nick Amato; Cressy Belden, a new resident to the area; County Municipal Court Judge Timothy McNicol; Murphy, a retired executive; Peter Russell, a former banker; Linda Weekley, a retired educator; and Robert G. “Geno” Williamson, a retired executive.

“Mr. Tim O’Dell, CEO and the board of directors of CF Bank were extremely generous in their gift of this property,” said Russell, who initiated the negotiations on behalf of the foundation. *“But that’s not all. They also gave us an additional \$5,000 to kick off our fundraising for necessary improvements to the property.”*

The WCF is welcoming donations. Membership starts at \$100. Donations can be made through the website, www.wellsvillecommunityfoundation.org or through any board member. The WCF is a non-profit, IRS tax exempt organization, founded and incorporated in late 2020 and receiving 501c3 status in 2021. The mission of the organization is to contribute to charitable purposes, or conduct activities, for the common good, general welfare and civic benefits of the Wellsville community and its environs.

Besides the CF Bank building project, the WCF is eager to begin supporting the community through improvement projects with the first being the ongoing business district “*Clean Streets*” campaign, which is being led by member Cris McNicol.

Williamson points out nearly everyone on the board grew up in Wellsville.

“Eddie (Murphy) went to L.A. and I went to Long Island,” Williamson said, “and we came back to the ‘Ville.’ We all want to support the town any way we can, and raise some revenue to spur growth. I think we will be able to accomplish something; how many somethings? We will see.”

Consumers Bank of Minerva is assuming ownership of the former CF Bank drive-through in Wellsville, along with the branch bank in Calcutta.