

College to Study Downtown Site

By Ron Ingram

A feasibility study being undertaken by Richland Community College may determine by April 20 if the old Stephen Decatur High School can be remodeled to serve as the college's permanent home.

The Richland Board of Trustees approved the study Tuesday night as its initial response to a proposal made last week by the Decatur Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

The Chamber proposed remodeling of the old high school, construction of a multi-level parking garage on the block south of the school and creation of a mall on the portion of North Street between the school and the proposed parking area.

Architectural & Engineering Service Corp., a Decatur firm, will do the study. The firm was hired earlier by the college to provide necessary architectural and engineering services for its permanent campus.

Ernest Lohr, the firm's chief architect, said Tuesday the study could probably be finished by the board's April 20 meeting.

Besides the engineering study of the old high school and the firm will estimate the cost estimating a remodeling cost, to construct the proposed parking garage.

It also will furnish its best estimate of construction cost

for a new campus so the trustees may compare both figures.

Richland has optioned a 102-acre site located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Center and Elizabeth streets on Decatur's northwest side for its permanent campus location.

While the architects and engineers are going over the old school, Richland administrators and the college's attorney will contact the six owners of the 14 lots located in the block south of the high school to determine availability.

They will check also on the future availability of the Decatur Armory, which is located nearby at 402 E. Eldorado St.

Trustee Donald G. Baird said he researched the lots' ownership and found the City of Decatur owns six, the Brown Trust (a family trust handled by a Miami, Fla., bank) owns one, Faries Wire Co. owns one, Citizens National Bank owns two, IPO Real Estate (connected with Osgood & Sons dress manufacturers) owns two and the Trinity CME Church owns one.

On the church property, located on the northeast corner of the block, stands a building that reportedly is the oldest structure in continuous use as a church in the city, Baird said.

The six lots owned by the City of Decatur are in the name of the DPL Corp. (Decatur Public Library) and are used as a parking lot, he said.

The college also must check with the Illinois Capital Development Board and the Illinois Community College Board to see if these agencies would approve the college locating on the proposed downtown property.

Trustee Dr. Hal E. Gronlund said the feasibility study doesn't mean the board has abandoned the northwest site.

Dr. Gronlund suggested that if the high school property appears to be a feasible campus location, the board should give the package of information back to its citizens advisory committee on sites for close scrutiny.

The 17-member citizens committee last year screened potential campus sites, recommending selection of the 102-acre northwest property after extensive study of more than 30 possible sites.

Board Vice Chairman Donald G. Klisares appointed trustees Baird, Gronlund, Neil Pistorius and Student Trustee Peter Vercellino to a committee to work with the architects in developing the college's permanent campus site.

L. Everett Belote, Richland vice president, said the first decisions the board will have to make on the campus

development should come in two or three weeks.

At that time the board will be asked to decide if the campus design should be one building or more, he said.

In other business Tuesday night, the board.

—Extended the contract of President Murray Deutsch through June 30, 1979, with his salary to be renegotiated annually but never in that period to be less than his present salary of \$36,885.

—Elected to exercise the second of two one-year lease options on the college's present temporary quarters at 100 N. Water St. The building is rented from First National Bank of Decatur for \$100,879.56 a year. The lease will take effect Aug. 1.

—Approved conversion as of Aug. 1 to a Centrex telephone system for the college for an installation charge of \$1,050. Monthly charges will be \$1,561.80 exclusive of long distance toll charges.

—Approved the 1976-77 academic year calendar for Richland showing a fall quarter starting date of Aug. 30 and a spring quarter ending date of May 19. Quarters will end on Fridays with registration for the following quarter to begin the next Thursday.

The new calendar closely follows the holiday and vacation schedule of public schools in Macon County.