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Central Middle School slated for demolition

• Whitney: No plans beyond clearing lot

By Nathan Jerke

Staff reporter

Whitney Benefits announced it plans to begin asbestos abatement at the former Central Middle School on Monday and demolition of the building the week of Sept. 12.

Whitney bought the school, which was decommissioned by the school district and the state due to physical and structural deficiencies, from the Sheridan School District for \$870,000 in September.

Whitney President Tom Kinnison said no plans have been made for development of the property, which is located on Custer Street between Works and Brundage streets.

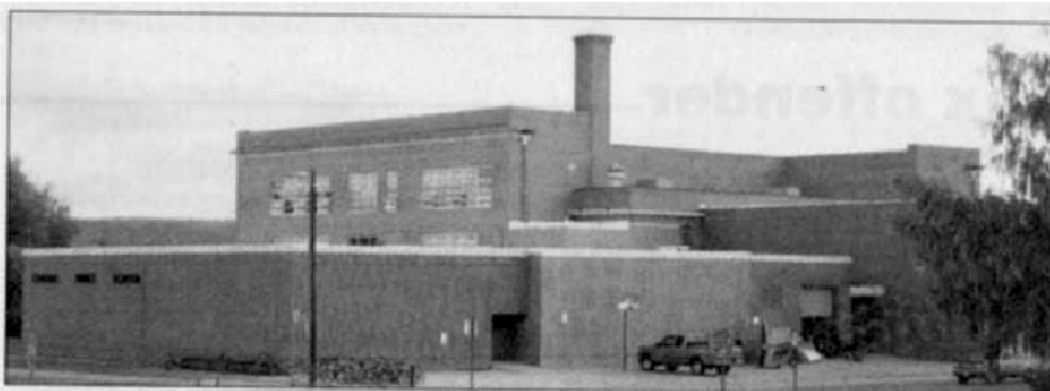
The site is adjacent to the Whitney Ice Rink, known as Sheridan Ice LLC.

"There's a lot of people that have a lot of suggestions," Kinnison said. "Whatever we do, it's going to be held in trust for the community, which is kind of a neat deal."

He added, "At this point in time we're looking at all sorts of options and, certainly, people with ideas can contact the Whitney offices."

Whitney, a nonprofit organization, has contracted with Interstate Insulation and Contracting Inc. of Sheridan to oversee demolition of the building. All B Excavation Co. of Big Horn has been retained for demolition and excavation of the site.

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Former Central Middle School will be demolished starting the week of Sept. 12, following asbestos abatement.



Tom Kinnison
Whitney Board President

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Kinnison would not say how much the demolition will cost. Deconstruction of the facility will last until the end of December, according to Interstate Insulation owner Randy Warnke.

According to Whitney, the building was decommissioned after plans to refurbish it proved too costly. An estimate to remodel the building, given five years ago, totaled nearly \$7 million; the cost would be about \$11.3 million today, according to Whitney.

In addition, the school cost more than \$90,000 per year to operate despite being used

only eight months per year, according to Whitney. The original part of the building was constructed in the early 1920s.

"We had people before who said, 'Jeez, we'd like to occupy the building,'" Kinnison said. "The problem is it's not safe. We couldn't do

that with the cost to get it up to code."

According to Kinnison, demolition waste materials will go to the Sheridan Waste Disposal Facility at no cost. This is due to an agreement with the city signed in October 2000 following the purchase of land formerly known as the Brewery Subdivision, where Whitney Commons now sits.

The deal came about following a plan to split the Brewery Subdivision with the city, but the city used more ground than proposed — about 40 percent of the property, according to Kinnison. Whitney agreed to accept landfill rights for future projects rather than a monetary payout for the land, according to Kinnison.

The school demolition came at the right time for Whitney, as the agreement is set to expire Nov. 1.

"The story is we've got to get it done ... that's all there is to it," Kinnison said. "Obviously, after that date we'd have to go back and renegotiate something or pay (for landfill space)."