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Club Recovery gets OK to move into Historic Hernando School

By MICHAEL D. BATES Chronicle Reporter
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County commissioners Tuesday unanimously agreed in consensus to rent out the county-owned Historic Hernando Elementary School to Club Recovery of Citrus County for \$1 a year on a five-year renewable contract.

The board directed its attorney to bring back a formal contract so it can formally vote on the matter. The school property is located at at 2435 N. Florida Ave. in Hernando.

The nonprofit is in the last year of its lease at its present location and because of landlord expansion plans it was necessary to find a new home to conduct meetings. With 8,000 square feet at the school, it offered the ideal venue.

Bill Antonen, president of Club Recovery, told the board that in addition to securing a long-term lease, his nonprofit would work to restore the historic building to its former state as much as possible.

Club Recovery, he said, would foot the bill for the restoration, estimated to take 10 years at a minimum \$305,000.

Antonen said the plan is to rent space to other community organizations for events, such as weddings.

"This will not be just Club Recovery," he said. "It will be open to the whole community."

County Administrator Steve Howard said the same architect who built the famous Vinoy Hotel in St. Petersburg also built the Historic School building so there's much history associated with the site.

"I'm looking forward to seeing this building brought back online," he said.

Club Recovery, a safe place for recovering addicts and alcoholics to meet, opened its first 2,400-square-foot building on May 5, 2012, on North Anvil Court off County Road 486 near Hernando.

It provides meeting places for recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and other 12-step programs.

County Commissioner Rebecca Bays said Club Recovery is providing a service in the community "that is so desperately needed."

"I'm passionate about this one," she said.

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