

Lorain food bank gets new home

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The Chronicle-Telegram

LORAIN — William Hurley has always had big dreams for the We Care, We Share Ministries food pantry, but little space or money.

The hopes of Hurley, the group's president, got a boost Monday night when City Council members approved giving the nonprofit a city-owned building at 1888 E. 31st St., conveyed through the Lorain Port Authority. The empty building, which the group has agreed to renovate, was

formerly the office building of El Centro, a Latino community center now at 2800 Pearl Ave.

The pantry, at 1701 E. 29th St., was formed by the Amherst Church of Christ and opened in 2008. It also provides clothing and has health and nutrition screenings.

Because of the recession and sluggish economic recovery, demand at the pantry has skyrocketed. In 2008, the pantry served 10,473 people. Last year, the group, which added a farmers market in 2010, served 33,269, a 217 percent increase.

"It's a great program," said Councilman Myroslaw "Mickey" Silecky, D-7th Ward. "They do a lot of good for the city, and we definitely want to help them."

Hurley had hoped to move out of the cramped, 1,700-square-foot building so that he could expand the food pantry into a community center that could provide job training and youth activities.

The former El Centro building is 3,240 square feet with a market value of \$77,530, according to the Lorain County Auditor's website. Prior to

approval, Mayor Chase Ritenauer praised the nonprofit and said the building is of no use to Lorain.

"This is an entity that wants to use the building," he said. "If not, it's just going to continue to sit there and continue to be a liability to us."

Hurley estimates renovations will cost about \$100,000.

Hurley said some private donors, who want to remain anonymous, have pledged money.

The group has an approximately \$25,000 annual budget that primarily comes from grants from private busi-

nesses and foundations, individual donations and church donations.

Hurley hopes to relocate in the spring and collaborate with existing groups to run programs at the center. He said the move will allow the church to better serve the community.

"We want to offer people programming that is going to take them from dependence to independence," Hurley said. "What we're doing now is helping people sustain."

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