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ANTI-FRAUD EFFORTS

Statistics: Federal efforts to fight health care fraud brought in \$4.1 billion in 2011. **Page A8**



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City Center Hotel sold

Renovations to cost \$9M

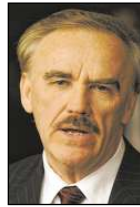
By Jeff Bollier
of The Northwestern

Oshkosh's troubled downtown hotel has new owners.

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Foundation and John Pfefferle and Rich Batley, partners in Appleton's Copper Leaf Hotel, on Tuesday announced their

purchase of the City Center Hotel for \$2.1 million.

Batley and Pfefferle stepped in to become new partners with the UWO Foundation after the organization's attempts to buy the property last fall in partnership with the Wogernese Hotel Group collapsed under the weight of unmanageable renovation costs.



Batley



Pfefferle



Wells

The partnership closed the hotel on Tuesday in preparation for a full-scale renovation anticipated to cost \$9 million

on top of the purchase price. Pfefferle and Batley will invest an undisclosed amount into the purchase and renovation of the hotel, and expect to pursue city of Oshkosh tax incremental financing, or TIF, assistance and community investors to fully finance the project.

"We're closing down today until we're ready to go," Batley said. "We'll strip the rooms down to the drywall, replace the furniture and fixtures. We'll renovate the

HOTEL, Page A5

COVER STORY: GUARD UNIT DEPLOYMENT

Family, friends send off 1157th soldiers



Members of the 1157th Transportation Company do a roll call before loading on buses headed to the Outagamie County Regional Airport to fly to Camp Shelby. They will train at Camp Shelby and then be deployed to Afghanistan. PHOTOS BY JOE SIENKIEWICZ/OF THE NORTHWESTERN

Unit will receive training, serve mission overseas

By Doug Zellmer
of The Northwestern

Bryan Nagorny clutched his son, Hayden, for a final goodbye.

He held his little boy tight to his chest and didn't appear to want to let go as he welled up with tears during an emotional farewell Tuesday morning with his wife, Kelly, by his side.

Nagorny and about 130 other citizen soldiers from the Oshkosh-based Wisconsin Army National Guard 1157th Transportation Company left Oshkosh for what could be up to a year away from home to include

ONLINE

Find more photos and video footage by scanning the QR code or go to thenorthwestern.com.



training and a transportation mission in Afghanistan.

"I'm not looking forward to leaving, but I am looking for-

1157TH, Page A5



Staff Sgt. Bryan Nagorny of the 1157th says goodbye to his son Hayden and wife Kelly just before the final lineup to head to Camp Shelby for training before deploying to Afghanistan.

Obama to highlight improved economy

Visiting Master Lock in Milwaukee today

Associated Press

MADISON — President Barack Obama will try to use his Wednesday visit to a Milwaukee padlock manufacturer to highlight an improving economy and showcase companies bringing jobs back to the U.S., even though the Wisconsin company's success isn't reflective of the state.

Master Lock, which Obama mentioned in his State of the Union address, is a good story for the president — especially in Wisconsin. It's a unionized company that brought back 100 jobs from China, and the state's Republican governor is being targeted for recall largely because of his proposal effectively ending collective bargaining rights for most public workers.

However, in the face of national growth, Wisconsin has lost private sector jobs in each of the past six months. Democrats have been using that to hammer embattled Gov. Scott Walker, who promised during his 2010 campaign to create 250,000 jobs during his first term.

Obama's visit to Wisconsin will be his first in more than a year



Obama

OBAMA, Page A3

INSIDE



ICE HAWKS FALL TO THE VOYAGEURS

The Oshkosh Ice Hawks were bested by the De Pere Voyageurs in WIAA Tournament action, 6-5. >>>**PAGE B1**



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For home delivery pricing, A2

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TODAY'S WEATHER

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»Five-day forecast/A2



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Hotel

Continued from Page A1

lobby. It'll be a total redo." The projected \$11.1 million investment in the purchase and renovation is about \$2 million more than the foundation and WHG had expected to spend when they secured a tentative agreement to buy the hotel from Nashco Hospitality Group LLC on Sept. 1. Batley said he expects it will take 60-90 days to secure financing from investors and secure a design team to oversee renovations and an additional six months to renovate the entire property. He said he anticipates the hotel will re-open sometime around Jan. 1, 2013.

Ongoing effort

Batley has experience in the Oshkosh market. He managed the Pioneer Resort and Marina for 18 years and is now a partner in the Copper Leaf and general manager of the Best Western Bridge-wood Resort in Neenah. Pfeifferle, the managing partner in the Copper Leaf, said he first attempted to buy the hotel from Bankers Bank of Madison in 2007 after it purchased the property out of foreclosure.

"We're back here today because of the community's involvement in this," Pfeifferle said. "The (UWO) Foundation is key to our decision to invest in the property. It's good to be back in Oshkosh."

UWO Chancellor Richard Wells said no taxpayer or student tuition dollars will finance the university's share of the project. He said the UWO Foundation's stake in the project will generate revenue to fund scholarships for Oshkosh residents to attend the university.

He added revenues from hotel operations may also help fund a hospitality program in partnership with Fox Valley Technical College and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, which op-

ONLINE

To watch Tuesday's press conference announcing the purchase of the City Center Hotel, go to www.thenorthwestern.com.

erates the UW-System's existing hospitality program.

"This is the type of thing we need to do more of, public-private partnerships, to help move our community forward," Wells said. "It's important for us (UWO) to stay fully engaged in our community."

Wells was among several people at Tuesday's announcement who singled out Oshkosh Area Community Foundation CEO Eileen Connolly-Keesler for her role in keeping efforts to purchase the hotel on track even after the UWO-WHG purchase agreement collapsed in late October.

"Eileen has been doggedly pursuing a way to make this whole situation work," Wells said.

Connolly-Keesler was not only a leader in negotiations to buy the hotel from Nashco last year, she also helped court local investors to finance the project. She's expected to play a similar role as Pfeifferle, Batley and the foundation try to bring some of those same investors back to this deal.

A turbulent decade

Tuesday's completed sale puts the hotel on a positive track after a turbulent decade of unpaid bills, foreclosures, bank hold-outs and deferred maintenance. Bankers Bank of Madison purchased the hotel out of foreclosure from Heyde Hospitality in March 2006 and held onto it for more than three years before selling it in May 2009 to Nashco Hospitality for \$2.1 million.

Nashco Hospitality's Nash Gill said he had "big dreams" for the hotel when he bought it at a public auction in 2009. Between then and now, Gill talked on mul-

multiple occasions about renovation plans and the property's potential, but few of the renovations he proposed ever materialized.

"The situation could have been very different today," Gill said. "But some things do not work out as planned."

Oshkosh Mayor Burk Tower said the UWO Foundation/WHG purchase offer seemed to shake loose a lot of interested buyers.

"After the first deal came close, there was a lot of interest in it," Tower said. "The UWO Foundation, the community foundation and the Chamber have been working on it ever since."

Connolly-Keesler and Oshkosh City Manager Mark Rohloff both said the hotel has been one of the key unresolved elements in public and private efforts to revitalize downtown Oshkosh. Connolly-Keesler said a renovated hotel will help revive convention center business and give central city businesses a much-needed shot in the arm.

"We want to bring convention business back to downtown Oshkosh and, with that, not only bring visitors, but jobs and revenue," Connolly-Keesler said.

Rohloff cited the hotel and its waterfront location as key to ongoing development of the river walk urban trail and other public investments in the central city.

"This is vitally important to downtown and the community," Rohloff said. "We have been looking for partners to enhance the city's and community foundation's investment in the convention center renovation."

Downtown Oshkosh Business Improvement District board member Megan Lang said a full-service business hotel and the expected increases in convention business can only help central city business owners.

"It's a nice Valentine's Day present for downtown," Lang said. "Everything the Business Improvement District is about is represented in this effort to revive the hotel."

Jeff Bollier: (920) 426-6688 or jbollier@thenorthwestern.com.

1157th

Continued from Page A1

ward to getting back," said Nagorny, a staff sergeant from Oshkosh. "There is a job that needs to be done, but saying goodbye is not an easy thing to do."

Nagorny's wife's tears also flowed as she said goodbye to her husband before he and the rest of his unit departed from the Wisconsin Army National Guard Armory on Armory Place in Oshkosh by bus shortly after 7 a.m. Tuesday to the nearby Outagamie County Regional Airport and a flight to Mississippi for training at Camp Shelby.

"We're proud of him," Kelly Nagorny said.

The men and women of the 1157th will train at Camp Shelby for about two months and then depart for Afghanistan.

Lt. Col. Jackie Guthrie, director of public affairs with the Wisconsin National Guard, said the 1157th is gearing up to go to Afghanistan, but are prepared to serve anywhere in the Middle East.

"The soldiers of the 1157th expect to go to Afghanistan," she said. "As soon as there is an order signed by the secretary of defense we will be able to confirm where they are going. Once a soldier is on active duty they will go where needed. Like all soldiers, those in the 1157th are versatile."

She said the unit could provide security for convoys and also conduct convoys to move equipment.

The unit will be on active duty for up to one year, according to current U.S. Department of Defense policy. It's the fifth deployment for the 1157th since 1990.

Sgt. Jason Foster, of Neenah, who has three years of service with the 1157th, had several emotional hugs with his girlfriend, Heather Schaller, before the unit left Oshkosh. This is Foster's first deployment with the

AT A GLANCE

PREVIOUS MISSIONS

»The unit was mobilized in December of 1990 and served overseas for about five months in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

»In September of 2002, the unit was put on active duty for nearly a year to provide transportation support to Army Special Operations Support Command and other units at Fort Bragg, N.C.

»In September of 2005, the 1157th was among a dozen National Guard units from Wisconsin sent to Louisiana to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

»The 1157th was deployed in 2006 for a year of service in Iraq, where they transported fuel and other goods and escorted convoys.

»The unit left Oshkosh Tuesday for about two months of training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi before leaving for a transportation mission in Afghanistan.

1157th.

"This day got here sooner than we all expected," Foster said, while holding his girlfriend tightly.

Schaller said it was a sad day to say goodbye to her boyfriend, who she would like to see return home soon.

Foster said he'll be able to communicate with Schaller and others through Skype, Facebook, phone calls and written letters.

"It will be very important

to have communication back home," he said. "It will definitely help the time to go quicker and knowing they're always there for you. That will make our mission a little easier."

Sgt. Joshua Kamin, a former Marine who serves with the 1157th, said he felt anxiety and some stress Tuesday morning before departure. He wanted everything to be good for his wife, Holly, while he is gone.

"I'm scared and a little bit stressed. This is all new to me," a tearful Holly Kamin said.

Sgt. Becki Freund, of the 1157th, who held her dog, Ella, a Boston terrier, said she's excited and is ready for deployment.

"There is anticipation and definitely some sadness, but I'm really excited," said Freund, who added she will miss her family, her friends and also her dog.

Capt. Chris Menden, company commander for the 1157th, told the unit before departure that Camp Shelby will be like basic training.

"Keep a positive attitude and remember your training is important and that you'll need this for our mission (in Afghanistan)," he said. "We'll be cleaning up and moving supplies and equipment, so it's a very important mission and we'll all get through it together."

As the soldiers departed the Armory by bus for the 30-minute trip to Outagamie County Regional Airport, Oshkosh resident Diane Malecki stood just north of the Armory holding a sign that read "Thank You For Your Service. Stay Safe"

"It's a small thing we can do to support the soldiers and their families," Malecki said.

Doug Zellmer: (920) 426-6667 or dzellmer@thenorthwestern.com.



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