

# BU parking deck progress put on hold

## Construction halted after structure found to be too close to road

Friday, March 14, 2008

**BY JOHN SHARP**

OF THE JOURNAL STAR

**PEORIA** - Construction on a section of a five-story Bradley University parking deck has stopped while a local contractor seeks city approval to proceed after an error was found showing the structure was built too close to Main Street.

The parking deck's concrete base - which already is in place - is anywhere from 2 to 9 feet closer to the city's right-of-way property than allowed.

"They found the error and immediately informed us," Second District Councilwoman Barbara Van Auken, whose district includes Bradley University, said. "It was an error. Just an error."

Original plans showed the north end of the deck to have a setback of 25 feet. But after concrete was poured, the parking deck's setback was found to be between 23 feet to 16 feet, violating approved development plans.

The contractor, Peoria Heights-based Williams Brothers Construction Inc., has applied for an amendment to the original development plan, asking for a waiver to allow the change in setback or distance from the deck to public property.

That request, however, must go before the city's zoning commission, which meets next on April 3, before City Council, who has final approval.

Until then, work on the deck's north side cannot resume.

Meanwhile, construction appears to be moving along on the southern section of the deck. The city issued a stop-work order on Feb. 27, which had brought the entire project to a halt for a single day before it was lifted but prohibited construction on the north end unless city officials grant a waiver request.

The construction mishap occurred after an apparent mix-up in plans. Williams Brothers first noticed the error in the blueprints and a corrected version was submitted to Austin Engineering for a modified version to be redrawn, according to accounts from neighborhood groups who recently met with the contractors.

While the plans were redrawn to realize the correct setback, the original set were inadvertently used.

A Williams Brothers representative could not be reached for comment on Thursday.

Replacement of the north portion of the deck would require expensive undoing. Costs could run up to \$1 million to tear up the base and rebuild the deck if the setback waiver is not approved.

Van Auken and neighborhood representatives said they were told by the university that it is Williams Brothers' responsibility to fix the problem and place the north end of the deck in its original location. Bradley spokeswoman Kath Conner referred calls to Williams Bros. and Van Auken.

Neighborhood associations in the area - already somewhat distrustful of the university's expansion plans - could have demanded Williams Brothers make the change. They haven't.

"We can demand them to go by the original plan, but you can't expect someone to put in another \$1 million to moving something and reconstruct it when it really doesn't make that much of a difference," said Nathan Wagner, president of the Arbor District Neighborhood Association.

Representatives with Williams Brothers have met with neighbors on at least two occasions, telling them what had happened and were apologetic. They also have offered to pay for modifications to the plan in the area between the deck and Main Street if neighbors considered supporting the company's request for a waiver to amend the current plan.

Among the ideas was to move the sidewalk along Main Street back from the roadway to improve safety as well as landscaping such as planting trees, facade improvements and lighting.

Jerry Jackson, an Uplands neighborhood resident, said he is pleased with the initial plans, saying it makes the area more pedestrian friendly.

"It might wind up looking better than it would have otherwise," Jackson said. "There is a certain degree of safety (with a redesigned sidewalk) in that redesign plan. Now it will be a much safer situation."

Van Auken said none of the changes will cost taxpayers anything. She said it was critical for Williams Brothers to get approval from the neighborhood groups before she was willing to support the changes.

"If they agreed to support giving (Williams Brothers) a waiver on the setback requirements, then I (am in agreement)," she said. "If they (did not), I would not."

John Sharp can be reached at 686-3282 or [jsharp@pjstar.com](mailto:jsharp@pjstar.com).