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Washington Co.

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Washington City Council voted Wednesday to apply for a \$200,000 tourism grant to bolster lagging efforts to raise money to construct an open-air pavilion for the popular Main Street Farmers Market in the city.

The announcement followed decisions that day by Washington & Jefferson College and Washington Health System to each contribute \$10,000 to the \$850,000 project designed to cover much of two city parking lots on South Main Street. Council also agreed Wednesday to contribute \$50,000 from the city's budget as matching money to qualify for the grant.

Mayor Brenda Davis said the market "does a great deal to attract tourism to this downtown," and she urged other corporations and the public to make contribution to fund the pavilion before the grant application's March 30 deadline.

The farmers market board proposed the pavilion in 2011, but had raised just \$385,000 to make it happen prior to Wednesday.

The 11-year-old market needs to be under roof in order to compete with others that "have been popping up all over the place," said Lee Stivers, vice president of its board.

"Ten years ago, there weren't that many," added Suzanne Ewing, the market's board president.

The city will apply for the grant through the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency in Southpointe.

Davis said the pavilion would make it easier to stage concerts and hold other events on the property, which would also generate income for the city from rental fees.

“We’re very happy to see the city of Washington taking this step,” City Councilman Joseph Manning said. “Of all of the things they try to do (in this city) the farmers market is by and far the most successful.”

Donations toward the project can be made at the Washington County Community Foundation website at <http://www.wccf.net>. Those who want to pledge support also can call Davis at 724-223-1380.

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