

HERMITAGE

High cost of footbridge raises officials' eyebrows

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By Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

Hermitage city officials on Wednesday discussed plans to build a pedestrian bridge on the west side of North Hermitage Road between the Walgreens property and the former Hermitage Middle School parcel.

There was no debate about the need for a bridge. "It's something that really has to be done," said the only resident who attended, Jim Fabian of Easton Road. "It's pedestrian safety."

However, there was a concern about its cost. Shenango Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization awarded the city \$160,000 to be used for construction, which does not include engineering fees the city is paying. "I can't imagine a foot bridge costing \$160,000," said Commissioner Rhonda L. Paglia.

Community Planner Jeremy P. Coxe called the bridge over Indian Run "a very basic project." It will be 60 feet long and eight-feet wide precast elsewhere and shipped to the site to be attached to abutments that will be built on-site. It will have "a little bit of decoration," he said. While bids, which tentatively will be advertised for in May, could come in lower, the cost is a matter of meeting PennDOT and federal specifications, Coxe said.

Brian McNulty, who is overseeing the project for PennDOT, said he can understand why people would think the cost of high, but added: "From our perspective, that's pretty cheap." The bridge's design has not been completed and city officials hope that construction can be done next summer.

It will connect the existing sidewalk at Walgreens and a sidewalk that middle school property developer Indian Group I Ltd., Pepper Pike, Ohio, will be required to build. Without the bridge, pedestrians would have to walk on the highway.