

MEDAL

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completely bare. Now, 357 boxes of various engineering text and reference books are stacked inside the spacious, sunny room. "It is very difficult to get textbooks," said Professor Arifullah Mandozai, dean of the university. "If we had to buy these books on our own, we would not be able to buy this many good, quality books in 10 years time."

The project supports the prioritization of the Afghanistan National Developmental Strategy, presented at the Kabul Conference on July 20, 2010, which is to improve higher education. The curricula of Afghanistan's

universities are being revised to meet the developmental needs of the country, private sector growth and accreditation, said Iverson.

"No proper education is why our country is in its current state," said Dr. Mohammed Sabar, chancellor of the university. "It is important to get an education, all people are improved with education. If we can improve education, we can improve Afghanistan. We need more, good, educated people to help the community."

The engineering department of Nangarhar University said they are especially thankful for the books.

"Now when I speak with the students, and make a speech, I can explain the U.S. Army gave us this very good opportunity, and they will see you are here to do good things to help us become better,"

said Mandozai.

Last May, the Plain Talk also published a news story of about the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers efforts to provide much needed school supplies, toys and treats to orphans attending the all-boys Ostad Khalil Ullah Khalili Orphans Education Center located in Kabul. Each of the 160 students received a new backpack filled with pens, paper, pencils, notebooks, crayons, erasers, rulers, sharpeners, toys, a puzzle and candy delivered by members of the Afghanistan Engineer District-North.

The humanitarian effort was made possible with state side cash donations from a church in Kentucky, and employees from the AED-N Qalaa House totaling \$1,600 and donations of toys, books, puzzles and

school supplies.

The Ostad Khalil Ullah Khalili Orphans Education Center was built in 2009 and is funded by the Afghan government. The students take classes in science, computers, reading and arithmetic. But, according to the orphan education center Director, Naqib Jami, finding qualified teachers in Afghanistan is very difficult. "Our teachers only make about [the equivalent] \$80 American in salary," said Jami. "So, it is very hard to find people that have the skills to teach science courses for so little money."

Though the school receives a certain amount of supplies at the beginning of the year, the supplies that AED-N provided will help the school's dollars go even further, possibly making it easier

to pay for good teachers.

"School supplies are very expensive in the markets," he says. "Anytime something is done for the kids it is welcome. We are very happy the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is here to help; we are very appreciative."

Once the volunteers from AED-N arrived at the school, the excitement from the boys and faculty could hardly be contained. Many students offered the only English they knew "thank you," while others gladly posed for pictures and shook hands with the volunteers who placed a bag on their back.

"I love the blank notebook for drawing and the color crayons, said Safha Hayti, 13 through a translator. "I am very happy with everything we got, it is very useful and we are glad to receive them."

For the AED-N members who participated in the backpack drop, the real reward was the sense of pride and satisfaction that giving much needed supplies to the students and staff provided. Even more special was the operation took place right around Mothers Day, making it a fitting tribute to the volunteers who spent the American Holiday with Afghan

children who no longer have parents.

"What a rewarding experience to spend Mothers Day with these orphaned Afghan children and present them with a future," said Iverson in the Plain Talk's story about the presentation of the donated items in a story published last May. "These donated school supplies and toys gave these boys smiles that will ensure a quality of life that every child deserves."

According to a citation issued by the U.S. Army, Iverson received the Bronze Star, Afghanistan Campaign Medal and the NATO Medal "for exceptional meritorious service as chief of the capacity building a team and executive officer while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. She also orchestrated a successful internship program between Afghan Engineers and the District. Major Iverson's distinctive accomplishments reflect great credit upon herself, the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Army."

The Plain Talk was unable to contact Iverson before press time as she was in transit to the Washington, DC area.

LAND

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VCDC agreeing to market the property in accordance with the goals of the strategic plan adopted the VCDC Board of Directors and Vermillion Now!

The city would receive full purchase price minus any sales transaction costs once the land sells. The city also maintains the right to have the land revert back if conditions of the memorandum of understanding are not met.

Since the transfer means the land is no longer publicly held, the VCDC is responsible for paying property taxes. The city has been leasing the land to be farmed, and the memorandum of understanding provides that income currently generated from that lease will now go to the VCDC to help offset property tax costs.

"What do you view the benefit of you owning the property as opposed to the city?" City Alderman Tom Davies asked Howe, "and

then how would you market it?"

"The benefit of the VCDC owning it is, as John alluded to, the flexibility in the marketing and the selling of the property is much greater with the Chamber and Development Company," Howe replied. "The city, if it sells the property for less than 90 percent of its appraised value, must go to an open bid process. That in and of itself limits some of the negotiation power that the city has over moving that property."

"There also is a desire for some level of anonymity ... and bringing these deals in front of a public meeting sometimes tips the hand of a negotiation that is not quite done yet," he said.

Marketing of the property, Howe said, will include basic signage in the vicinity of the land. "We will also look at doing some enhanced activity on our web site, and create some brochures that I can take along to trade shows, along with other basic marketing."

Aldermen Steve Ward and John Grayson both voiced support for the transfer of property following the guidelines set in the memorandum of understanding.

"I think that it is imperative ... that we try to attract businesses and give ourselves every opportunity to try to attract a diverse economy to Vermillion," Ward said. "This is one tool that we haven't had in our arsenal - a flexible tool that we need."

"It isn't the feeling that a developer that a developer is going to come in and buy this land, turn around and profit from it - it's going to be that you're going to sell this to a business, or corporation, or for an industry - it's not going to be sold to a developer to develop it at some future date?" Alderman Howard Willson asked Howe.

"That's correct," Howe replied. "We have no intention of having this property out there for speculation purposes. The intent is to deal with individual businesses coming to the community, and part of the agreement, for the benefit of the public, is they would have to file a building permit within one year and complete the project within two years, and they would have to meet the covenants that the city already has in place. We do not intend to sell this as a whole to a developer."

PLAN

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citizens.

Another area of study is where growth is projected to occur over the next 20 years.

"We want to put together a plan that has a balanced budget with what we anticipate for the transportation needs in the region," Troe said. "The bottom line is ... we're going to have to be making choices, establishing priorities. We're not going to be able to afford to everything that we want to, or that we even need to."

"So we're going to have to be,

in this process, going through and prioritizing those improvements that we want to make," he said.

Troe said there currently are five main goals to the transportation plan:

- Provide an efficient multi-model transportation system that effectively moves people and goods.
- Provide a safe and secure transportation system.
- Maintain the existing transportation system.
- Manage the transportation system's impact on the social and natural environment.
- Provide a transportation system that supports and enhances the area's economy.

"A lot of times when people are

working through a plan like this, all we focus on is, 'What else do we need? What else do we need?'" he said. "And we kind of lose sight of the infrastructure that we've already put on the street or the environment, and that has to be maintained."

Information has been gathered since the summer, with completion of the plan projected for next summer, Troe said.

He added that people need to remember that the plan is long-range.

"A lot of the improvements that we may be looking at aren't something that we're going to be able to do over the next five, or even 10 years," Troe said. "But development in the region is

going to continue, and we want to make sure that something we anticipate wanting 20 years from now ... that development doesn't encroach into it, and we have issues associated with conflict between roadway improvement and the existing development at that time."

As part of the study, an Internet survey of transportation needs and travel patterns within the city limits also is being conducted.

To participate in the survey, visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/vermillion_transportation_survey.

For more information on the project, visit



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