

Housing Authority Approves Restoration of Avalon Court

By Cara Host, Staff writer chost@observer-reporter.com

WAYNESBURG — Greene County Housing Authority gave the go-ahead Tuesday to proceed with plans to restore the fire-damaged Avalon Court apartment building in Waynesburg.

Some work should begin within the next few weeks. Structural steel for the building's roof should arrive early next month, and workers will continue to demolish the plaster walls and other interior elements that were damaged in the April 22 fire.

Two women, Patricia Eddy, 61, and Velma Morris, died as a result of the fire. About 41



others were left homeless, and they have been relocated to interim housing. Former residents should be able to move into the new apartment building by late fall 2011.

The restored building will use the same foundation and exterior walls, but it should be much different in both form and function from Avalon Court, which was built in 1966. The project architect, Mark Altman of Altman and Altman Architects in Uniontown, said the apartments should be more livable, the building will be more energy efficient and the exterior should be a bit more attractive. "It was our approach to get the authority the best building we could get them with the insurance money," Altman said.

The authority wants to avoid using public money to finance the project. Instead, the fire insurance company should cover the cost and authority officials will work closely with the insurance adjuster as the project progresses. If no taxpayer money is used, the authority will not have to go through the bid process, which can be both time consuming and costly, according to authority solicitor Lane Turturice of Washington.

The new apartment building will have fewer apartments, since plans call for more one-bedroom and wheelchair accessible units and fewer efficiency units. The old building had 40 apartments and the new one will have 34 apartments, 21 one-bedroom units, six accessible units and six efficiencies. The authority offices, which were housed at Avalon Court, were eliminated from the plans to make room for larger apartments.

The exterior will change, both to give residents distance from the tragedy that occurred there and to make the building more attractive, Altman said. Architects in his firm were inspired by historically significant buildings in Waynesburg and tried to make the new Avalon Court fit that theme. "Other than the brick and the basic structure, everything will look completely different," Altman said.

The new building will adhere to modern safety and building codes, which include a sprinkler system, fire partitions and other improvements.