

# Council to hear results of Belton-UMHB talks

By Holly Wise | The Killeen Daily Herald | Posted: Tuesday, July 12, 2011 12:00

Two houses in the West Belton Residential Historical District could be demolished by the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor after the Belton City Council hears negotiations between the city and the college tonight following a lawsuit filed against the city in February.

The Heritage Preservation Board rejected UMHB's request to destroy the structures located at 716 Wells St. and 229 W. Seventh Ave. on Feb. 3.

In turn, UMHB followed the process outlined in the Heritage Preservation Ordinance and appealed to district court with a lawsuit on Feb. 24.

Both entities agreed to negotiate a settlement to avoid litigation. "This is a negotiated settlement between the city and the university that addresses the lawsuit and establishes a time period of eight months where the university would be allowed to demolish the two structures," said Belton City Manager Sam Listi.

The time frame would also give the council time to "take another look at the ordinance, revise it, modify it to address the concerns expressed," he said. "The (city council) would certainly prefer, as I understand it, the opportunity for an appeal process that doesn't automatically kick something into district court."

**Suspension of ordinance** According to a statement circulated by the city Monday, the proposed settlement would suspend the application of the Heritage Preservation Ordinance until March 31, 2012, for the West Belton Residential Historic District. In that time frame, UMHB would be permitted to destroy the homes.

The suspension of the ordinance applies only to properties in the West Belton Residential Historic District, one of six historic districts established in 2009. According to information provided by the city, this includes the properties identified in the lawsuit as well as other properties owned by UMHB, properties owned by First Baptist Church and privately owned properties.

## **Action expected at meeting**

The Heritage Preservation Board will be presented with the proposal prior to the City Council meeting today.