

## **JMU To Raze Former Co-Op**

**By EMILY SHARRER**

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**HARRISONBURG** — Demolishing the former Rockingham Cooperative building off Grace Street makes the most budgetary sense for the property's new owner, James Madison University, according to officials. A \$382,100 demolition project will begin this week or next, starting the process of turning the building at 101 W. Grace St. into a surface parking lot, JMU announced Friday.

“The university didn't have a specific program or department that would fit into that space, so, basically, you're looking at renovating it just for the sake of renovating it,” said Bill Wyatt, public affairs manager for JMU.

The university came to the decision after reviewing a \$50,000 study completed by Richmond-based Glavé and Holmes Architecture that laid out three options for the property: a \$22.7 million full renovation, a \$15.2 million partial renovation or the demolition.

When additional costs, such as furnishings, were added in, Wyatt said the full renovation cost was closer to \$30 million and the partial renovation cost \$22 million.

When the university purchased the building in 2010, it was with the intention of linking the former Harrisonburg High School, now JMU's Memorial Hall, with the rest of campus off South Main Street — a goal outlined in the university's master plan, Wyatt said.

Because the university has no specific use for the building and the general renovation project would only pull resources away from projects already in the works, Wyatt said demolition made sense.

“What we determined from the study is that there was great cost to renovating the building at the expense of other capital projects that had been in the pipeline for quite some time,” he said.

Construction projects now in the works for the university include the renovation of the former Rockingham Memorial Hospital and a renovation and addition to Duke Hall, which houses the school's art and art history programs. A quick look at the university's master plan shows maps of the Harrisonburg campus with scatterings of purple shapes designated as proposed new buildings.

“To take \$30 million and renovate a building for no specific purpose and to displace other capital projects that have been part of the plan for some time just wasn't cost-effective,” Wyatt said.

JMU purchased the 100,000- square- foot former Rockingham Cooperative building and adjacent property in October 2010 for \$12 million.

The rest of the co-op property acreage was purchased a year later for nearly \$2 million.

Since purchasing the site, James Madison University has used only a small portion of the property to house landscaping equipment, Wyatt said.

The demolition, being completed by D.H. Griffin Cos., based in Greensboro, N.C., is expected to wrap in May.

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