

# GREEN LIGHT



## Construction contract approved for downtown restaurant

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SENECA — The Seneca Improvements Corporation took a step toward bringing a restaurant back to Ram Cat Alley at its annual meeting on Tuesday, approving a \$700,000 construction contract for the rebuilding of Vangeli's restaurant.

The board agreed to a contract with J. Davis Construction, Inc., of Westminster, up to a total of \$700,000.

J. Davis submitted a bid of \$745,400, which was higher than the two other bids — Construction Design Interiors Inc. at \$720,804 and Benjamin Collins with Pandecon Safety coming in at \$458,400. City administra-

tor and board president Scott Moulder said neither of the other two companies are authorized, bonded or insured with their licenses to do work totaling more than \$300,000, "and the price of this job was going to exceed that."

He added value engineering would be done to cut the project down to a maximum of \$700,000.

The Seneca Improvements Corporation also approved an extension of its line of credit with Oconee Federal Savings and Loan for the project to \$900,000 to cover other costs associated with the construction, including the demolition of two buildings on the property.

Moulder said the building is scheduled to be completed

before Christmas, if the weather cooperates.

The corporation developed a business partnership pilot program last year with a focus on helping area businesses secure financing for needed renovations projects.

Moulder said the program is serving the mission of the corporation, which was founded nearly three years ago to help revitalize the downtown area. Vangeli's is the first business to be involved in the program and is working through the line of credit with Oconee Federal.

The restaurant was closed nearly a year ago, and the property was demolished due to the

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condition of the roof of the adjoining building — the former City Pool Room. Both buildings were demolished, and the new restaurant will be built there.

Restaurant owner Evan Dimas owned the pool room building, and the corporation required the restaurant and future businesses entering the program to deed their property to the city in exchange for receiving financing for renovations. The corporation would then lease the property back to the owner, whose rent payments would cover the line-of-credit payments the corporation will repay to its partner bank. Moulder said he expected the term of the lease to be 10-12 years. Dimas said he is glad work is finally close to beginning.

**'Once we get the program going and it works out, I think it's going to work for other people, too.'**

**Evan Dimas**  
Vangeli's owner

"It's been a long journey for sure," he said. "From the meetings that we've had, it sounds like they could begin by the end of the month. It could be done as early as December. It's exciting that we're finally at this point."

The restaurant will be built at the location where Vangeli's stood on Ram Cat Alley and will be expanded to include the former City Pool Room space. Dimas said the extra space will bring changes, including expanding the seating ca-

capacity at the restaurant from 40 to 115.

"My goal is to be able to get in there and get going and possibly open in the middle of January, and have a few weeks to kind of get our bearings straight before Valentine's Day hits," he said. "If it looks like we'll be able to get our furnishings in anytime in December, then we'll say we're going to be here for Valentine's Day and kick 2020 off with a bang."

He added that the program will likely help other businesses in the downtown area in the future.

"Once we get the program going and it works out, I think it's going to work for other people, too," Dimas said. "I think it's going to be able to improve the whole downtown area over a few years."

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