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Progress on Waldorf redevelopment discussed at roundtable

By Paul Lagasse plagasse@somdnews.com 9 hrs ago

Improvements to sewer and stormwater management systems in the Old Washington Road corridor are needed before the showpiece redevelopment project planned for the area can proceed, attendees at last week's economic development roundtable were told.

"Planning for infrastructure improvement continues apace," said county redevelopment director Taylor Yewell. "There are a number of development projects that have been proposed that are sort of in a holding pattern waiting for sewer upgrades and so forth."

John Stevens, chief of capital services, said that his staff has been working on infrastructure plans for the Washington Urban Redevelopment Corridor for two years, including upgrades to water and sewer lines as well as roadways.

"We're about, I would say, 60 percent [complete] on the water and sewer," which includes stormwater management, Stevens said. "We're about 70 percent [complete] on the design of the roadway."

Stevens said that the plan is to have stormwater drain into a settlement basin that would be built underneath the railroad tracks that parallel Old Washington Road.

"We're facing some issues with elevations and drainage, [but] as far as the roadway, sewer and water, that is progressing well," Stevens said, adding that county has been coordinating with utility companies that serve customers in the redevelopment corridor to ensure their current and planned needs will be met.

"Those are the major challenges that we're facing that may require the acquisition of additional land, which costs money, as well as the cost of relocating these utilities," Stevens said. "We are progressing, but we are facing difficult challenges."

The plans include establishing maintenance agreements with landowners for the upkeep of county water, sewer, and stormwater management systems that run through private property.

“It has to be a holistic system,” Stevens said.

Stevens added that the county hopes to have the infrastructure systems completed within five years.

WURC is one of three areas in Charles County that received a federal designation as an “opportunity zone” last month, along with the Town of Indian Head and the Waldorf Station development at the intersection of U.S. 301 and Mattawoman Beantown Road.

The opportunity zone program allows investors to defer paying federal taxes on capital gains for up to ten years, provided that they deposit the money into a specially designated opportunity fund.

The money in the opportunity fund is then used to invest in small businesses and development projects in the opportunity zone areas.

The economic development department is expected to begin scheduling seminars and workshops for local investors once the state housing and commerce departments determine how the program will be administered.

Stevens said that renewed interest in the commercial development of the Maryland Airport in Bryans Road could lead to plans being “dusted off” to extend sewer service to the property.

“We do have designs on the shelf ready,” Stevens said, noting that the process would likely require the renewal of some permits and other reactivation activities, which could take some time.



Yewell explained that county administrator Michael Mallinoff has instructed the department of planning and growth management to begin looking at defining a proposed overlay zone that would allow commercial development on a 50-acre parcel adjacent to the airport and Livingston Road.

The Board of County Commissioners voted last December to exempt the parcel from a conservation easement for over 200 acres of land around the airport.

“The objective is to allow development and make the airport more attractive to potential investors,” Yewell said.

Yewell explained that several potential buyers have expressed interest in the airport and two adjacent parcels in the years since they were put up for sale following the death of owner and operator Gil Bauserman last April.

One potential buyer, Yewell said, is going through a “vetting process” with the Federal Aviation Administration.

“We want to maintain that momentum,” Yewell said. “We want to make sure that acquisition goes through.”

Last Thursday’s business roundtable was the latest in a series of quarterly events organized by the Charles County Department of Economic Development to bring together business leaders and interested residents to hear updates on development and redevelopment initiatives.

The event featured several Facebook Live presentations with attendees both before and after the event, and for the first time questions were taken from social media.

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