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Will project go forward at business park?

By Rebekah Sungala, Herald-Standard
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Officials involved with development of the Fayette County Business Park should learn within a few weeks whether or not the project will go forward as planned.

The business park contains about an acre of wetlands that the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are concerned will be affected by construction of Matthew Drive Extension in South Union Township.

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Township Supervisor Robert Schiffbauer said officials are unable to begin extending the road until the DEP issues the proper permit.

The roadway extension, according to Schiffbauer, is crucial to make the business park attractive to potential companies that want to relocate there.

Schiffbauer said several businesses already have expressed a desire to locate in the business park. Once completed, the 425,000-square-foot area is expected to create about 1,200 new jobs.

"We're trying to create jobs and make things happen in an area that has been depressed for so many years," he said.

Schiffbauer said the business park is a "\$50 million investment" for the county and that it will be a shame if the DEP refuses to issue the permit that will allow construction to continue.

HSTV Daily Schedule	
Local Interest	▶ Supervisors and engineers from McMillen Engineering of Hopwood met with officials from the DEP a few weeks ago, and Schiffbauer said that the meeting was not productive.
Entertainment	▶
Calendars	▶ However, during a recent visit to the area, DEP Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty said the state is working "hand-and-glove" with project coordinators to find a solution that suits both local government and economic growth while maintaining the integrity of the local environment.
Websites	▶
Community Choice Awards	▶ "We can go two routes, including creating a wetland area elsewhere or redirect and redesign the road" McGinty said.
Contact Information	▶
The Greene County Messenger	▶ According to Schiffbauer, the DEP officials he met with "did not want to hear" the supervisor's proposal to move the wetlands to another area within the same watershed.
Other Calkins Media Sites	▶ Schiffbauer said the DEP gave supervisors three options, two involved moving the road, while the third option called for them to build a retaining wall that would keep sediment from entering the watershed.

None of the DEP solutions to the wetlands problem are financially feasible for the township, Schiffbauer said, noting each would cost about \$2 million.

Schiffbauer said creating another wetland within the same watershed would cost the township about \$130,000.

"That's the common sense thing to do," he said, noting that the supervisors are more than willing to create another wetlands area to make up for the one that would be disturbed by extending Matthew Drive.

In addition, Schiffbauer said McMillen Engineering hired a biologist who studied the wetlands and concluded moving the wetlands to another area would not be detrimental to the environment.

According to Schiffbauer, the biologist determined the small wetland area, where it's currently located, "is an insignificant amount of low-quality wetlands."

"He was a very well-qualified biologist, and he went in and analyzed the area, and that was his professional conclusion," Schiffbauer said.

Schiffbauer explained the supervisors have enlisted the help of U.S. Rep. John P. Murtha (D-Johnstown) and state Sen. Rich Kasunic (D-Dunbar). He said they also have discussed the problem with Gov. Ed Rendell.

If the DEP is unwilling to issue a permit that will allow the wetlands to be moved and the road to be extended as planned, Schiffbauer said it will have a detrimental affect on the township and the county.

"It would possibly and very potentially be a deal killer," Schiffbauer said, noting once again that the township cannot afford the options presented by the DEP.

Schiffbauer said project coordinators should know within the next few weeks whether or not the DEP will issue a permit.

"We're hoping to receive a per

mit in the mail soon," he said.

During her visit, McGinty said the DEP is willing to work with project coordinators and will make every effort possible to see the project succeed.

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