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LakePoint gains approval from state assessment

by Matt Shinall

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Approval for the 1,380-acre LakePoint Sports development was granted by the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission as they cleared the Development of Regional Impact.

Dream Parks at LakePoint is set to break ground in Emerson this spring, if all goes according to plan. Thus far, the development has met with approval following the state's decision that "the proposed local government action is in the best interest of the region and,

therefore, the state."

Current infrastructure abilities and future plans provided by the city of Emerson along with project details from the developer were used to gauge the potential impact on the community and surrounding areas.

Comments were taken from departments of interest to determine their views on a variety of topics, including environmental challenges, traffic flow and inter-jurisdictional conflicts.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave two recommendations: one for staged grading of the land to limit loss of stream habitat from stream system impact and the inclusion of post-construction stormwater management practices.

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division seconded the recommendation for a stormwater management system due to impervious surfaces covering 46 percent of the development. The EPD also suggested increased capacities for water and wastewater. Noted in the DRI was a verbal agreement from the city of Cartersville to provide capacity in both instances.

"The city of Emerson, to service this facility, will be using the purchase system we have with Bartow County, that water is supplied to Bartow County by the city of Cartersville, so they are advising that they do have sufficient capacity for that. On the wastewater side, we will be utilizing our Red Top project, which is a sewer system that the city owns but sewage is conveyed to the city of Cartersville for treatment, and they have advised that they have capacity for that as well," said Emerson City Manager Kevin McBurnett.

With state approval, the development will now eye rezoning to a mixed-use classification to accommodate the proposed 1.8 million square feet in retail space and 600,000 square feet of office space in addition to movie theaters and baseball, lacrosse and soccer fields. Purchase of the property will then finalize the preparation to begin construction.

Emerson is now compiling research for an impact study of their own to better prepare and plan for the development and ensuing growth.

"Currently, we are in the process of trying to do economic impact analysis utilizing services from Georgia Tech, and once those numbers come in, we hope to know more what type of economic impact this will have on this community," McBurnett said.

The local economic impact analysis will look into projected sales tax and fees; job creation; utility rates and consumption; electric power usage; property values; and tourism-related data.

Melinda Lemmon, executive director of the Cartersville-Bartow County Department of Economic Development, has aided the development process and noted that circumstances within a unique project such as LakePoint create challenges in conducting reviews and studies.

"This is a complex project. It is not a normal project. Typically there is one employer with 'x' number of jobs and a certain type of investment and at the end of the report you have the positive, negative or neutral impact that the one company produces. This is actually one development but multiple companies, which is what makes it so difficult," Lemmon said.

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