

County Industrial Board options tract, eyes two others

The county Industrial Development Board plans to examine at least three properties with willing sellers to see if they have potential as industrial/retail parks.

Meeting last Friday morning, the board approved a \$1,000 option on the first property, about 65 acres off Milldale Road in Dandridge. They also agreed to develop a “request for proposals” for engineering services that will provide base information on this and other properties to be considered.

The option, approved unanimously following motions from Board Members Daryl Keck and Alex Miller, gives the board a year to study the tract and determine whether it is to be purchased—a move that would require funding from county commission. The agreed purchase price in the option agreement is \$265,920, just over \$4,000 per acre.

Board Chairman Larry Masters said the land is the first tract of three or more expected to be considered.

“I appreciate the hard work of [Economic Development](#) Director Garrett Wagley and the Chamber in getting us to the point where we have some properties to consider,” Masters said. “Ideally we’ll be looking at tracts on several sides of the county, and we’ll come up with a good plan for commission to consider.”

The 65-acre tract is owned by Gordon Kyte and is located just south of the intersection of East Price Road behind the Patriot Square shopping and office center. Wagley said at first glance it appears to have potential for mixed retail and industrial use, including at least a couple of industrial lots. Utilities, which include sewer, water, and gas, are adequate, but ingress/egress could be an issue, said Wagley. The land is generally rolling but has a ridge on the southeast side.

Acting on motions from Board Members Jeff Duignan and Miller, the group agreed to develop a request for proposals from engineering companies by their next monthly meeting. Board members say they want an engineering firm that can examine properties when asked and report back on their suitability for development.

In a meeting of investors in the Chamber’s “Building a Better Future” economic development program last week, consultant Henry Luke said the county is on track with most of its goals in the program, with the next logical step being a program to purchase industrial land and possibly construct a speculative building. A couple of years ago, the board offered several potential industrial properties to commission, but none was purchased.

After the meeting, Masters said he feels Wagley and the Chamber have done a “good job” of filling existing industrial land and buildings that have been empty, despite a challenging economic climate. Last week, a new \$5 million footwear plant, FIT USA, that employs about 50 people opened in the [Jefferson City](#) Industrial Park. It fills a building occupied by another manufacturer that closed several years ago. Wagley said Thursday that the Chamber is working on recruiting a new industrial occupant for the former Fibrecraft building in Dandridge.

In other discussion last week, the board members heard a report from Wagley that the proposed transfer of a 17-acre tract to the Town of Dandridge has stalled. The land, which is part of the county industrial park but is not suitable for industrial land, had been proposed for later use as a recreational park, but the board has not been able to reach an agreement with the town. Wagley also reported that he is working on a grant that could pay some of the cost of a new sign at the county industrial park.

By Steve Marion | Staff Writer [The Standard Banner](#). Tuesday, May 27, 2014.



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