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REHOBOTH TO HEAR FUTCHER FARM ANNEXATION REQUEST

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By Trish Vernon

The Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners will have an interesting proposal to discuss at the Monday, May 5, workshop session.

Rebay, LLC the contract purchasers of the 195 – acre parcel know as the Futcher Farm on the west side of the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal, will present a proposal to annex the land into the city as a potential subdivision.

The land lies adjacent to the City of Rehoboth Beach because it annexed both side of the canal in the 1970s.

If annexed, the proposal features a relief route built by the developers from Church Street at Rehoboth Avenue Extended, past Canal Corkran, through the Futcher property, ending at Glade Road. This would allow quick access and public work vehicles.

The developers would benefit by annexation because Rehoboth Beach's density per dwelling unit is higher than Sussex County's. Sussex allows 6 units per acre for single family dwellings, while Rehoboth Beach's minimum lot size is 5,000 square feet.

The potential map of the development provided to the city shows 112 acres for single family unit; 20 acres for condominiums; 16 acres for townhomes; and 12 acres for commercial use, which is adjacent to the properties along the east side of Sandalwood Drive.

What would the city gain by annexing the development? Besides a relief road to the city, the developers would provide a variety of housing.

An information sheet for their engineering firm of Bowen, Davis and Friedel states annexation would "allow the city to designate zoning to reflect the small town neighborliness of the existing community while providing for a mixture of housing types" and provide commercial establishments to serve the residents. It would also be an additional "downtown" area with pedestrian character.

"If we did annex, we probably wouldn't allow density of this type to occur. I don't think anyone in the city wants to see it developed under our existing code. We'd want the lots to be larger and since it's still farm land we could dictate how the development is planned through our subdivision ordinance," Mayor Sam Cooper said.

"The developers said they are receptive to architectural input so we could dictate a type of housing that would be different from most of the developments surrounding us," he added.

The report states that annexation would allow for better connectivity of a potential walk on both sides of the canal as well as a park and open space for trees and plantings.

The city would see additional revenue through annexation, including parks meters and residential parking permits, building permit fees, transfer taxes and property taxes.

Transfer fees alone would bring in an estimated \$13.362 million, while additional property taxes would amount to an estimated \$1.934 million and building permit fees at \$2.652 million for city coffers.

The procedure for annexation begins with the commissioners, who can vote to take the proposal to public hearing should they choose to do so.

Following the hearing, the proposal would go to public referendum, with a majority vote needed on both City of Rehoboth Beach voters and, in this case, the owner of the parcel in question.

“We’ll have Rebay give a presentation to the board and see if there’s any interest in the proposal,” Cooper said. “If there’s sentiment to proceed, we’ll look at it further.”

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