

## Possible developments in store for south Holyoke

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

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City council members held a scheduled work session to discuss possible Holyoke development projects Tuesday, Jan. 28.

South of Cobblestone Inn and Suites in Holyoke is the location proposed for possible development along Highway 385. The area would be the length of a city block between Hargreaves Street and Scheunemann Street.

Council members were joined by attorney Russell Sprague, who was representing an absent Rupert O'Neal, and Tom Bennett. O'Neal owns the land in question, and Bennett is a member of the board of directors for Phillips County Economic Development and is a local business owner.

O'Neal and the city have both recently taken the initiative to conduct drainage studies to determine the capacity of the O'Neal pit. Sprague notified board members that the results from the study were nearly complete and that the two studies could soon be combined to determine if development is feasible.

Sprague and the city discussed whose responsibility it is to move forward. If able to move forward with development, Sprague indicated O'Neal's ambition to sell off lots within the development.

Bennett, representing First Pioneer National Bank and PCED, raised questions about what needed to be done so that the bank, any other local business or any potential business could set up shop along the highway.

According to Bennett, south of town is an ideal location for development.

"This is prime property," Bennett said Thursday, Jan. 30. "This is where the city's master plan says you need to grow, where it is logical to grow because city services are close by."

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Traffic flow coming into town and the south end being the newer looking portion of town are also reasons that set the south end apart, said Bennett. There also isn't much accessibility for development on the north, east or west ends of town.

Finding locations for businesses in the past has been problematic. A lack of sites available has forced some businesses to look elsewhere for relocation.

Other businesses have had to buy a lot with buildings already standing, demolish them and begin construction on their business. If sites for development were already in place, new businesses might not have to perform costly tasks such as demolition.

"It's really about what you want to do as a community," Bennett explained. "Do you want to grow? And if you want to grow, where do you grow? If you build it, will they come? If you have the infrastructure and land available, will somebody be looking at you? Will someone who has been wanting to expand be able to?"

City Superintendent Mark Brown stated Thursday afternoon that according to municipal code, developers are responsible for all development costs, although the city has not operated under the strict code in the past.

In recent years, the city has helped handle getting utilities to new portions of the town, while drainage, grading and curb and gutter work was handled by developers.

Brown noted that extending utility services south and drainage problems would be the biggest obstacles for development.

With the O'Neal pit handling drainage for most of the southwest portion of town, adding more infrastructure could overload the pit.

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The pit was built between the late 1970s and early 1980s, and currently can only handle a 25-year event. If it were to overflow, the area across the highway by Holyoke Church of Christ at 105 W. Scheunemann St. would be the first to flood.

Colorado Department of Transportation regulations would also come into play as new roads would have to be constructed. A traffic study would have to be performed to determine if acceleration and deceleration lanes would be necessary.

Time is also of the essence as the land is currently being farmed by O'Neal. If development were to move forward, he would have to adjust his sprinklers.

Decisions cannot be made at work sessions, but all parties were able to engage in constructive conversation regarding how and what can be done in the future.

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