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County may lease land near Grandview

Commercial, industrial development a possibility for the 566-acre parcel

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La Plata County is looking at leasing a large piece of land near Grandview for possible commercial and industrial development.

The 566-acre parcel is owned by the State Land Board. On Tuesday, La Plata County commissioners approved an application to the land board to enter into a five-year planning lease, during which specific possible uses for the land would be determined.

The county plans to seek a \$200,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs to use toward planning the development.

A staff report on the proposal noted that 235 acres of the parcel appears suitable for commercial uses while the remaining 331 acres could be used as open space because of topography and other constraints. It is located west of County Road 234 and north of County Road 235.

The question of where to put new industrial development has vexed planners seeking to forecast future land needs.

"There is a dearth of commercial and industrial space in our community, which is necessary for existing businesses to grow and for new businesses to locate in La Plata County," a county report on the proposal said.

The site in the past had been considered as a new location for the La Plata County Fairgrounds. Assistant County Manager Joanne Spina said that could be among the future uses considered for the property if the agreement goes forward.

Under the arrangement, the county would have the exclusive right to develop the property for five years - with an option for another five years - with no lease payment. If development occurs, a separate long-term lease would be necessary. Revenue from the lease would help fund the state's public schools.

County Commissioner Kellie Hotter called it a great opportunity to "look outside the box."

"It's just really a win-win," she said.

About 73 acres of the original 640-acre parcel is held by the Durango School District for future school-related needs.

In other action, La Plata County commissioners approved a list of general topics that will be considered for integration into the county's existing land-use code, which remains in effect since commissioners early this year scrapped a 2007 version of the code.

Planners are seeking to extract and refine some portions of the 2007 code for use in the existing code while a new document is crafted. Planners now will cobble together the interim document, which will be presented to the public and the Planning Commission before going back before the board for final approval.

The county has opted to focus on a comprehensive plan - which it does not currently have - before segueing into a new land-use code. Commissioners on Tuesday approved hiring consulting firm Community by Design to work with the county on the plan, which is expected to be completed in less than two years. The county will pay \$164,400 for the first two phases of the four phase project.

In separate action, an agreement was approved for contractor GRVP to construct turn lanes for County Road 235 on County Road 234 this summer to accommodate future construction traffic into the Three Springs development. At the same time, the county is reconstructing a half mile of County Road 234, from County Road 235 to just south of County Road 228.

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