

## **LCEDC's focus shifts to Kershaw**

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**By Gregory A. Summers - Staff Writer**

KERSHAW - When it comes to drawing industry and jobs to the Kershaw area, something always falls through.

Town officials are frustrated that the town recently lost a \$98 million cement plant to Pulaski, Va.

James Hardie Co. already has one plant in Summerville and the Kershaw area was under consideration, said Keith Tunnell, president of the Lancaster County Economic Development Corp. Tunnell spoke to Kershaw Town Council on Monday night.

But the company has opted to expand its existing plant in Virginia instead of locating at a 53-acre tract near the Andrew Jackson Area Recreation Center. The company also looked at sites in Tennessee and Florida.

"The last few years, we get our hopes up to win something, but never do," said Councilman Mark Dorman. "There's got to be a reason for it."

Tunnell said when he assumed leadership of the LCEDC, his first priority was getting an industrial park in Heath Springs.

The plan is to market the county's two southern towns together.

"It's my board's belief that what is good in Heath Springs is good in Kershaw," Tunnell said. "We have to market the area one and the same. It's difficult to bring industries to rural area, but it's not impossible. To market them separately doesn't make any sense."

With plans for the Heath Springs park in place, Tunnell is now setting his sights on the Kershaw area.

Tunnell said the LCEDC wants to hire a consultant to see if the 117-acre Kershaw Industrial Park on S.C. 601 or the tract near the AJ rec center would be best to develop for industry.

Tunnell said while the property near the rec center was tentatively scheduled to be used for future ball fields, it's attractive to medium- and small-sized industries because it has rail access.

But he said the S.C. 601 site may be more suitable to market despite a lack of rail access. Right now, the S.C. 601 site near the Kershaw Correction Institute hasn't been developed.

"Fortunately or unfortunately, there's a large labor force available in this part of the county," he said.

### **A lack of buildings**

Tunnell said most companies want sites that are already zoned for industry. They are looking for areas where environmental impact, geophysical and topographical studies are complete and some engineering and basic roads are in place.

He estimates that it would cost about \$100,000 to prepare one of the two Kershaw sites for industries to locate there. Most of the money to pay for the work would come from grants and LCEDC funds.

"It's not enough to drive up 601 and say there's the Kershaw Industrial Park," Tunnell said.

Tunnell said he is also working to get some new industrial buildings constructed throughout the county because there aren't enough available. Tunnell said 70 percent of all industrial prospects want a building already in place.

The development corporation wants to add one in Kershaw, Heath Springs, Lancaster and Indian Land.

"But he said, there'll be no "cherry-picking," where one developer will choose the best site.

The corporation will select one developer to build all four buildings and then market them at no cost to the county. The county will provide the land, and the developer will sell the building to the company that locates there.

"Other counties are doing it and we're losing out because we don't have any," he said. "It's like you've got a store with no product on the shelves. The key is marketing and putting a plan together.

"We have to double our efforts down here and find a company that wants to be a big fish in a small pond," Tunnell said. "It is not an impossible job."

Council gave Tunnell the nod to proceed with the study. It also unanimously voted to file an application to have the property near the recreation center rezoned from commercial to light industrial.

In other action, council members took their new oath of office and welcomed new Mayor Tommy Baker and council members Jaybo Sims and Eddie Coates. Mark Dorman was unanimously elected as mayor pro-tempore.

Council also:

n Appointed Jason Whitley to the Lancaster County Joint Recreation Commission.

n Set April 23 as the downtown clean-up date for Spring-a-Thon. Those wanting to help with it will meet in front of Kershaw Town Hall at 8 a.m.

Councilman Wade Hunter said officials will try to get local churches involved. It will also be broadcast on the community bulletin boards at local radio stations and Town Administrator Tony Starnes said he will produce a flier to post in Kershaw area businesses.

"There's a couple areas we need to concentrate on," Starnes said.

Unanimously voted to spend \$3,000 to help sponsor this year's Spring-a-Thon. The money was already designated in the 2004-05 budget. Tunnell said LCEDC would also donate \$500 in sponsorship.

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