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Tuesday, January 09, 2007

Redevelopment authority sells Route 40 land to auto dealership

By Amy Karpinsky, Herald-Standard
07/02/2003

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The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority voted Tuesday to sell 31.76 acres in North Union Township to Superior Ford Inc. to develop into as many as four automotive dealerships.

The authority agreed to sell the property at \$20,000 per acre, for a total cost of \$635,200. The tract, located along Fan Hollow Road and Route 40 beside the Uniontown Holiday Inn, sits across Route 40 from the Fayette County Business Park and is divided into two parcels.

Speaking from California via a speakerphone, Superior President Gustavo Palmar said he plans to develop the first parcel within 18 months. That parcel will include a Ford franchise, as well as a Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep franchise, all of which will move from their current location, less than a mile away along Route 40. Palmar said that by moving the franchises, he will create 20 to 25 additional jobs.

The preliminary floor plan for the new facility includes a 14,550-square-foot building, a 2,024-square-foot service reception canopy and a 572-square-foot new vehicle delivery canopy. Palmar said extensive infrastructure work must be done to the site.

Palmar also plans to secure two additional new car franchises and build two new facilities on the second parcel within five years. The franchises, which he declined to name, are not represented in the area. He said 20 to 25 additional jobs will also be created for the second parcel, for a total number of additional jobs of 40 to 50. Palmar said the average income at

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his dealership is more than \$34,000 per year, and he doesn't employ anyone who makes minimum wage.

In a letter written to authority Executive Director Raymond C. Polaski, Palmar wrote that Superior has nearly doubled the number of employees (from 35 to 67) since its inception two years ago.

"With new facilities and expanded operations, employment opportunities have potential to grow even more," Palmar wrote.

The Superior agreement marks the third time the authority has tried to sell the property. Polaski said that with the approval, plans for the site are "up and running again." Two years ago, the authority voted to sell the property to Null Land Inc. for the same price, but that agreement fell through. At that time, plans called for three automotive dealerships, luxury townhouses and an office building.

Earlier this year, the authority readvertised the property and received interest only from Null Land Inc.

However, Null owners Lawrence and James Filiaggi offered less for the land, saying they wanted to use only half the acreage. The authority declined the offer and advertised the land for sale.

Polaski said Superior came forward with a proposal after the most recent advertisement for the sale of the land. The board held an executive session with Superior representatives June 23 to discuss the proposal.

At the annual reorganization meeting, the board voted to retain the same slate of officers as they did last year: Kenneth M. Finney Jr., chairman; Ross F. DiMarco, vice chairman/assistant secretary; Charles Cieszynski Jr., treasurer; James S. Wolesslagle, assistant treasurer; and Paul Bortz Jr., secretary.

The authority also conducted the following business:

- Voted to apply for a \$584,272 weatherization grant. Polaski said the grant should help 145 households that meet income criteria to reduce fuel consumption an average of 25 percent. He said the elderly and handicapped are the first priority, and 750 eligible applications are on a waiting list.

- Approved road reconstruction projects for Footedale and Smock. A.C. Moyer Company Inc. of Lemont Furnace will handle the \$95,217.69 project in Footedale, and Victor Paving & Construction Co. of Monongahela will complete the \$159,068.25 project in Smock.

- Approved a \$17,900 contract with 3-D Development Inc. for a roof replacement at the Republic Volunteer Fire Department in Redstone Township. The project is being funded through the Community Development Block Grant program.

- Heard from Finney, who reported that he recently drove through the Fayette County Business Park and thought the Careerlink building is looking good. Polaski reported that work on the county Mental Health/Mental Retardation building is back on schedule and progressing. Assistant Executive Director Andrew French said that a draft proposal of a strategic marketing plan for the business park may be available for review next month.

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