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Marketing plan in works for historic Springer Homestead

By Amy Karpinsky, Herald-Standard
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The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority heard Tuesday that a marketing plan for potential reuses for the historic Springer Homestead is well under way.

Authority assistant director Andrew P. French reported that a grant has been received from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission for technical assistance to market the county's business park as well as the Springer Farm. The farm site, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is located on former county property on Fan Hollow Road in North Union Township.

Executive director Raymond C. Polaski reported that there has been interest in the historic site, which the authority obtained from the county last year. The 14-room, red brick house was built in 1817 by Levi Springer, who had hoped to use it as a hotel along the National Road (Route 40), which was then under construction. The building is currently vacant and boarded up, but Polaski said it is "very structurally sound."

French said a group of experts in the marketing field will advise authority representatives on a strategic plan for using the sites.

Polaski said he anticipates that later this year the authority will receive proposals on the Springer Farm. He said several calls have already been received regarding proposals for the site.

During his report, Polaski said that work continues at the Fayette County Business Park along Route 40. He said the Career Link building is "really looking good." He said the road

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is on its way to completion and only needs asphalt placed on top. He said the road will lead to the site of the future Mental Health/Mental Retardation building. In response to a question about an outpatient building being considered by Uniontown Hospital, Polaski said it has been put on the back burner for the moment.

The authority approved a resolution to enter into a grant agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development for a \$350,000 Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program grant for housing rehabilitation. French said the funding will help the authority to serve an additional 15 to 20 homes during the next year.

Polaski said the grant will allow the authority to target areas with existing water and sewage projects to utilize for matching funds. He said the eligibility requirements remain the same as for other rehabilitation grants, with the addition that the homes must have children under the age of 18 in them. "The idea is to keep children in stable household conditions," Polaski said. "It stretches our rehab money even further."

The areas from which the selection will be made include Smock Hill, Smock, Maxwell, Labelle, Dutch Hill, Dearth, Searights, Lower Farm, Haydenville Road, Kaider Road, Fairchance and the townships of North Union, South Union and Washington. Polaski said those areas have existing water and sewer projects.

In other business, the authority approved a motion for weatherization director Al Jeffries to attend the U.S. Department of Energy's 2003 National Weatherization Training Conference in Phoenix, Arizona Aug. 18-21.

Polaski said Jeffries has attended conferences in the past and has come back with information about the newest programs and grants. He estimated the total cost for the conference as between \$2,300 and \$2,400.

The authority approved a contract with Widmer Engineering for Phase II of the Smock Sanitary Sewer System improvement project in Franklin Township. Phase II includes restoration and road reconstruction.

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