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Hotel still planned for Fanning Springs

Story and Photo By Jeff M. Hardison © May 12, 2016 @ 9:37 a.m.

FANNING SPRINGS -- People who live in the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties have learned over the past 10-plus years that no one can predict when the building of a hospital may occur in Chiefland.



Tommy Langford (right) speaks to the Fanning Springs City Council.

However, the people of the Fanning Springs area may heard a glimmer of hope in regard to a 130-room Howard Johnson Hotel with a price tag in the range of \$14 million to \$15 million that is anticipated to open its doors for business in November of 2017.

Tommy Langford, a former Gilchrist County commissioner, on Tuesday night (May 10) told the Fanning Springs City Council, and members of the press and the public, that he feels certain this future hotel will be built. It will be opening its doors to overnight guests in November of 2017, he said.

Langford said he was speaking as a Gilchrist County resident who has children and grandchildren who he wants to see be able to have jobs without driving to Gainesville, Ocala, Lake City or moving away for a job.

The project started three or four years ago, Langford said. The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity is involved and there is a grant, which shows a requirement to create about 30 jobs, he said.

There was one developer at a point, he said, but that person stepped out of the plan. The Gilchrist County Board of County Commissioners approved a 10-year tax abatement to help encourage the project from moving forward, he said.

Other developers have been approached, Langford said. One developer is pulling together paperwork to prove to the state its financial ability to complete the project, Langford said.

Langford believes that after the hotel is built, not only will travelers and visitors be accommodated, but this will serve as a springboard for other development. While everyone wants to see continued strength in the agricultural industry, he said, the development for increasing the other markets is possible at the same time.

With municipal sewer and water service available in Fanning Springs, Langford said, the business improvements in this city will help the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

In other business-oriented news, Fanning Springs City Councilman Tommy Darus said he would like the city to work at creating a farmer's market in Fort Fanning, like the one the Chiefland Chamber holds occasionally at one of its city parks.