

THURSDAY



Dinners that begin with a box of rice

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Spalding excels at Mill Classic

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New sewage plant, lines along Highway 16 could be in place by '26

BY LARRY STANFORD

NEWS REPORTER

LSTANFORD@GRIFFINDAILYNEWS.COM

GRIFIN — Attracting commercial and industrial development along the 10-stretch of State Highway 16 — known as Arthur K. Bolton Parkway (AKB) — between I-75 and the City of Griffin is critical if Spalding County hopes to take the tax burden off of residential

property owners. Studies have shown that industrial development along AKB could bring in more than \$10 million in property taxes.

A key component to attracting industry will be the development of sewer along AKB. The Spalding County Water Authority (SCWA) started a sewage project feasibility study in 2022, and brought the results of that study

and their plans to the Spalding County Board of Commissioners at their March 3 work session.

SCWA General Manager Joseph Johnson told the BOC that in addition to completing the study, the Water Authority has been working on two strategic projects that came out of the study.

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LARRY STANFORD

Industrial development along Highway 16 (Arthur K. Bolton Parkway) from I-75 to Griffin City Limits is key to taking the tax burden off of Spalding County residents. The key to attracting industry is providing sewer along the corridor.

PLANT

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“We’ve completed 80% of the construction documents related to the sewer project along Arthur K. Bolton Parkway (AKB), and we have submitted all state-required permits to get our EPD permits,” said Johnson.

“Fast forward the next 18 months, assuming that the Water Authority board votes to proceed with Phase II, via the contract, we’re going to obtain all state-required permits, we will acquire all the required easements along the forced main route and the sewer routes, and we will install and commission a wastewater plant and begin discharging wastewater,” continued Johnson. “Getting that all done is tentatively scheduled for August 2026.”

Johnson added that they are planning to make the project expandable in order to continue to provide sewage capacity for the county for years to come.

“We purchased the property just north of the Pine Ridge Landfill at the Wani Road/Bailey Jester intersection,” he said. “We tried to think through all the processes. This is a 26-acre property, so we have a lot of room for expansion. The topography of the land works in our favor.

“There will be a Line A, a lift station, a forced main, and a sewage plant. Line A, from Wani Road to the Cabin Creek bridge on Highway 15 will open up roughly 5,000 acres of sewer along AKB. Gravity sewer likes to flow downhill, and we’re following the creek. We’re buying easements to run a trunk main along Cabin Creek because in order to get to our plant, you’re going to have to run the sewer along the creek.”

“What you’re looking at is a 15-inch main that goes to a lift station, a forced main, and then a plant,” continued Johnson. “We’re talking a plant for 200,000 gallons a day (god), a lift station for 650,000 god, and the gravity main for a maximum of 2.4 million gpd. So this is going to outlive

a lot of us in this room.”

Johnson noted that the SCWA is operating under the philosophy that once the sewage line and plant is built, developers will pay to tie into it.

“The property that we purchased, we can put up to 600,000 gpd on it,” he added. “The plant, as it sits right now, we can expand to 400,000 gpd relatively cheaply. We’re going to put in the infrastructure to size for the 200,000 gpd, the pads are going to be sized for the ultimate build-out of 400,000 gpd, so to get the doubling in size will cost of us a fraction of what it would normally cost.”

PROJECT COSTS

Johnson noted the entire project could cost \$21.2 million.

“We’ve spent roughly \$3.6 million to date,” he said. “That includes the \$2.9 million in ARPA funds that the county provided.

“But the total expenditures remaining is roughly \$18.2 million. That is our best guess on property acquisition services, appraisals, and buying property and easements.

“So the \$21.2 total price tag is a fluid number. It is constantly moving. But we are trying to value-engineer this project, to get the best project at the best cost for the longest duration.”

Johnson said without any customers already signed up, the SCWA can’t do any budget revenue projections for the project.

“The Water Authority is going to be running at a significant loss for the foreseeable future,” he said. “We’re not foreseeing breaking even until we get about 100,000 gpd.

“This assumes that we take a 30-year note of some kind at 4.25%. So we’re talking about interest payment of \$1.5 million. We think that’s doable. The principal and interest will be 50% of our budget.”

SCWA Board Chair Wade Cannon told the BOC that the plant will need about 17,000 gpd of sewer when it starts.

“We don’t have that, and we’re going to be running it with chemicals, which is expensive,” he said. “It is going to take a few years to get enough customers for

it to be running like it should be. We’re starting from scratch.

“We have several developers we’ve talked to along the corridor, and they’re all waiting for the deadline on this plant,” added Cannon. “No one has asked for tax abatement. Everybody is going to be paying some sort of capital cost recovery fee. But to get started, we’re going to need help.”

BOC Chair Clay Davis asked what the SCWA needs from the county.

Cannon replied that the number that has been discussed is \$500,000 a year.

“The discussion on the duration has been anything from a year to perpetuity,” he said. “I, personally as chair, I am thinking three years at \$500,000 a year, starting in June 2026.

“But once we kick this off and sign the contract, it is roughly 14 month to completion — realistically we won’t sign it until June, so we’re looking at August or September of 2026 when it becomes operational and we get our final permit from the state.”

Davis noted that the important part is making sure the citizens understand what they are talking about.

“This is an economic engine to be able to carry the tax base,” said Davis. “We’re talking about investing \$500,000 a year for three years, and the return on investment is to the county, not to the water authority. The big tax dollars that are going to come in, are going to come in to our side of the house. This is a return on investment and industrial taxes that will follow.”

District 1 Commissioner Gwen Flowers-Taylor agreed.

“This is not about the county giving away anything,” she said. “This is actually us investing in our infrastructure for economic development and industrial growth, and not having to really do the work.”

At the BOC meeting that followed the work session, the board voted 4-0 to provide a letter of support to the SCWA, and county manager Steve Ledbetter was asked to see how the first \$500,000 can be worked into the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.