

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

## BENTON HARBOR

# River Run planning gets city's approval

Proposed 500-acre  
development would  
be big boost for  
Benton Harbor

By JULIE SWIDWA  
H-P Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — The Benton Harbor City Commission gave its nod of approval Monday to the planning process for a 500-acre residential, commercial and recreational development that has the potential to greatly increase the city's tax base.

City Manager Dwight "Pete" Mitchell said citizens will hear more about the proposed project in the coming months.

The Harbor Shores River Run development would create a substantial number of jobs in the building process alone, people involved in the planning process have said.

The development, which might include a Jack Nicklaus signature golf course, would straddle the Paw Paw River on 500 acres bordered roughly by Lake Michigan, Graham Avenue, North Shore Drive and Higman Park Road.

Officials from Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Benton Township and Berrien County have been meeting for months to develop the plan, and have said many of the parcels in the 500 acres would require environmental cleanup, have soft soil, are landlocked, and have limited development potential.

The Harbor Shores River Run development would be a collaborative venture between the cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph and Benton Township, and would be funded by private developers, Mitchell said.

The various parcels included in the 500 acres are owned by the cities, the township and Whirlpool Corp. Whirlpool owns a small piece, and most of the land is owned by the city of Benton Harbor.

The City Commission approved a resolution agreeing to work collaboratively and in good faith with the Harbor Shores Development team — the respective city and township officials — and other governmental and community-based organizations to plan the development.

Mitchell said residents will be invited to meetings about the development, but he is not sure when.

Jeff Noel, Whirlpool's vice president of communications and public affairs, and Mark Mitchell, president and CEO of the Cornerstone Alliance, have said in earlier announcements about the development that it has the potential to add \$125 million to Benton Harbor's tax base.

Please see RIVER RUN, page 8A

## RIVER RUN

From page 1A

Noel and Mitchell have said it would take 10-15 years to build. Representatives from St. Joseph, Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Whirlpool and Cornerstone have talked about the idea for two years.

Mayor Wilce Cooke and Commissioners Steve McCoy, Nickolas Magee, Glenn Yarbrough, Ruthie Haralson and Ralph Crenshaw approved the resolution of support of the planning phase of Harbor Shores River Run.

Commissioner Etta Harper abstained, saying she needs more information. Harold Hampton also abstained because he was late for the meeting and missed the

city manager's presentation. Eddie Marshall was absent.

City Commissioners asked that another item, acceptance of a \$12,648 grant from the Kellogg Foundation, be removed from the agenda until they have more information.

The city, along with Jolene Prosper of PTC Consulting and the Workforce Skills Development Center, was awarded the

money to train young people to be teen health ambassadors and possibly prepare them for careers in a health care field.

Mitchell said Prosper wrote the grant, and the city's only role in the proposal would be to hold the money in trust.

The mayor and mayor's office are mentioned in the project description submitted with the grant application, and the teen

health ambassadors are referred to as the first component of an initiative planned by the mayor.

Commissioners said they didn't like the city being named in a grant application for a program they knew very little about.

The Legislative Committee agreed to have a special meeting July 6 to get more information about the proposal. Prosper will be invited to that meeting.