

'Ironworks at Willowbrook' permit could pave way for Meijer grocery

By Clint Wolf cwolf@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Friday, May 2, 2014 4:00 pm

The planned commercial development along Willowbrook Road in South Beloit took a step closer to reality Wednesday, and a major grocery store chain's name is being mentioned as a potential anchor for the development.

A Special Use Permit for a Commercial Planned Unit Development was approved by the South Beloit Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Commission Wednesday. The permit was issued to Hendricks Commercial Properties which is planning a multi-store business development at 15635 Willowbrook Road.

Artists renderings presented at the meeting show a Meijer grocery store at the center of the proposed development, which is being called Ironworks at Willowbrook.

Rob Gerbitz, president and COO of Hendricks Development Group, based in Beloit, said he could not comment on any specific business associated with the development. He did say Hendricks Development Group is talking to multiple potential tenants for the development in South Beloit.

Gerbitz said the special use permit and the approval of the final plat for the development was an important step forward for the project. The issues now go to the South Beloit City Council for approval.

The development is planned to house 15 to 16 business tenants.

Mayor Michael Duffy said although no contracts have been signed regarding Meijer coming to South Beloit, he has received the impression that the outlook is very positive.

"We have been talking about this project for about two years and that's the first positive outward sign that this is actually going to happen," Duffy said. "I think when this gets started, it's really going to go."

The Meijer grocery chain opened its newest store in South Haven, Mich. Thursday, one of nine stores the company plans to open in the Midwest this year, according to the company's website at www.meijer.com. The Meijer company has announced plans for a store near the intersection of Illinois Route 173 and Perryville in Machesney Park.

Meijer, based in Grand Rapids, Mich., operates 205 supercenters and grocery stores in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky.

Hendricks owns about 70 acres of land along Willowbrook Road south of Route 75 in South Beloit. The property previously was owned by Oakfield Development.

Talks about a potential retail business development on the land have been ongoing for about nine years.