

Lack of commitment from state may stall Miracle Mile Project

Mar 29, 2017 Reporter Bill Mardis

“Until Gov. (Matt) Bevin and the Transportation Cabinet assure me the state will build either I-66 with an interchange or service road access to Del Spina’s properties ... and there is no indication of a commitment ... well, that’s where we are.”

Pulaski County Judge-Executive Steve Kelley was assessing the outcome of a meeting March 17 with Anthony (Tony) Del Spina and Lake Cumberland Area Development District community development specialists seeking road access and infrastructure for a proposed \$100 million Miracle Mile Mall in eastern Pulaski County about a mile on this side of the Rockcastle River.

Del Spina, president of Lake Cumberland Resort near Burnside, has proposed a 1 million square foot retail complex together with a 200-acre family entertainment center on a 428-acre parcel of land he owns on Ky. 80 midway between the Pulaski and Laurel counties. He touts the project as a mini-Gatlinburg-Pigeon Forge regional complex that would create up to 3,000 jobs and attracts the 4.75 million people who annually visit the Lake Cumberland area.

Del Spina needs help from the state Transportation Cabinet to construct highway access: Either build the proposed I-66 through the area with an interchange at the development, or construct service roads off two-lane Ky. 80. He presented the request to the state last October “ ... but they haven’t responded,” Del Spina said Tuesday morning. State Senator Rick Girdler, asked about the possibility of the road access to the project, responded: “ ... the state doesn’t have any money”

Also, a development of this type needs infrastructure - water, wastewater disposal and natural gas. Somerset’s natural gas main from Eastern Kentucky is near Del Spina’s proposed development but water and sewer mains would have to be extended through the wilderness from the vicinity of Valley Oak Commerce Complex off Ky. 461. There are wide differences of opinion on how much this would cost: Somerset Mayor Eddie Girdler said the city would have to have \$20 million up front to extend the infrastructure. Del Spina’s engineers say the cost would be slightly more than \$2.2 million.

Del Spina reportedly asked Pulaski County to issue bonds to pay for the infrastructure. He says the bonds could be secured in a manner where taxpayers would not end up retiring the bonds.

Kelley, the only public official up to now who has publicly tried to assist Del Spina, says the Miracle Mill project is stalled until the state commits to construct accesses to the property. "That's where the project is ... nothing can be done until the state commits to build access roads. Waylon Wright and Chari Bennett, both community development specialists with the Area Development District, are looking for possible sources of grant funds, Kelley said.

Meantime, Del Spina, an eternal optimist, points out U.S. Government feasibility studies decades ago said his recently completed Lake Cumberland Resort, now a \$50 million development " ... was not possible."