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Thursday, April 10, 2008

Thurmont officials willing to entertain strategic planning

by Jeremy Hauck | Area briefs

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Commissioners on Monday set aside April 21 for a work session to discuss the possibility of creating a strategic plan for Thurmont.

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Such a plan would ease future annexation requests and streamline discussions between the town and major organizations or government agencies, business leaders told commissioners.

“There would be no Thurmont without the businesses,” said Vickie Grinder, chairwoman of the town’s Economic Development Committee and general manager of Cozy Inn. “When you sit down with these people, you’d better have some type of plan, because they’re not going to invest [otherwise].”

Commissioners Glenn D. Muth, Ronald A. Terpko and Robert E. Lookingbill supported the idea.

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“I think we have to have something to start with,” Terpko said.

Thomas Cromwell, a leading member of a grassroots group that opposed the annexation of the Myers Farm last year, cited the example of Jim Thorpe, Pa., as good strategic planning by a municipality. The town, formerly known as Mauch Chunk, rebranded itself by becoming the resting place of legendary athlete Jim Thorpe, and became a destination municipality along the way, Cromwell said.

Grinder and Lookingbill said Thurmont has the potential to become such a destination for both tourists and visitors, with its location near Camp David and other landmarks.

Thurmont spells out rules for awarding bids

Thurmont commissioners will soon vote on an ordinance codifying how it awards service and construction bids. The ordinance will resolve questions about the town’s process that have been raised during the construction of the new police station.

“There was quite a few people who questioned quite a few things,” Terpko said.

Once the ordinance is passed, projects costing \$15,000 or more will be advertised in the newspaper, and the mayor will have to sign the final contract. Projects costing between \$7,500 and \$15,000 will go to open bidding, but will not be advertised.

Commissioners will also have to explain their reasons for awarding contracts to bidders who have not come in with the lowest bid.

Town staff will award contracts valued less than \$7,500 as they see fit.

Emmitsburg to plant trees, shrubs

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Conservancy to obtain trees and shrubs for the greening of Emmitsburg, according to Sue Cipperly, town planner.

The planting of 70 trees and 124 shrubs along near Emmitsburg Elementary School is scheduled for April 19. A similar planting in Emmitsburg Community Park has been put on hold, Cipperly said, because of storm water and land use concerns.

Emmitsburg also has to revise a 2003 ordinance in order to accommodate future projects of a similar nature, she added.

“The town is supportive of this type of project,” she said. “The town is going to revise its ordinance to address the situation because there are additional projects that are going to be happening.”

The ordinance mandates grass to be lower than eight inches in height along creeks. But a true buffer would consist of freely growing vegetation, Cipperly said.

“The plan is to not mow and just let the natural vegetation grow,” she said.



