

For release: Immediate

Wabash gets OK to annex business park

After much lobbying, numerous phone calls from Wabash to Indianapolis and lots of cooperation from both sides of the aisle, Wabash has a law to allow the annexation of the new business park on the city's northeast side.

Bill Konyha, President and CEO of the Economic Development Group of Wabash County, announced today that attached to Indiana's new two-year budget bill was an amendment allowing Wabash officials to annex the 221.6 acres located north of U.S. 24 and west of Ind. 13.

Annexation will allow the city to provide services like police and fire protection to businesses that locate in the new park as well as extend city sanitary and storm sewers as part of the necessary infrastructure.

Konyha gave State Rep. Bill Ruppel, R-North Manchester, the biggest share of the credit for getting the amendment through to passage and signature by Gov. Mitch Daniels.

"This is important to us as most business attraction projects include companies that require fulltime, paid police- and fire-protection service," Konyha said. "They require these features because they have a serious impact on their property and casualty insurance costs."

In the beginning, House Bill 1447, a bill on local government matters, included a section amending the state code to permit Wabash to annex non-contiguous land for purposes of industrial development. Ruppel negotiated the language into the Senate bill after it passed the House.

The Senate version of the bill was different, but it came out of the House-Senate conference committee, which included Sen. Gary "Doc" Dillon, R-Pierceton, who also represents part of Wabash County.

"The Senate approved the conference committee report," Konyha said, "and sent it back to the House. It was the next bill to be considered when the speaker of the House (Rep. Patrick Bauer, D-South Bend) adjourned the House without passing the state budget, and essentially killing a number of bills, including HB1447."

When the Legislature reconvened, Ruppel got the language inserted in the budget bill. Officials of EDG, the Wabash County Chamber of Commerce and Wabash Mayor Bob Vanlandingham urged Gov. Mitch Daniels, Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman, State Treasurer Richard Mourdock, Indiana Secretary of Commerce Mitch Roob, Bauer, House Minority Leader Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, Senate Majority

Leader David Long, R-Fort Wayne, Senate Minority Leader Vi Simpson, D-Bloomington, and other members of the Legislature to support the language in the budget bill.

“We emphasized that it was a no-cost measure that only leveled the playing field for Wabash County with other communities that already had such measures approved,” Konyha said.

The Wabash City Council approved the appropriation of \$1.667 million earlier this year to purchase the two parcels that make up the new business park. The deeds are in the process of being transferred.

The park is bounded by Ind. 13 on the east, County Road 50N on the south, County Road 100N on the north and County Road 100W (Dowd Road) on the west.

The land cannot be annexed before Jan. 1, 2010, because federal law does not allow annexation in the year prior to a census.