

The Leader-Herald

Hotel growth possible

JOHNSTOWN — The planned Vail Mills development area may be the first test of whether Fulton County’s hotel feasibility study findings will come to fruition, a county official said Tuesday.



The \$19,500 study done by Chicago-based Hunden Strategic Partners and released last fall indicated there is a market for a new hotel or motel in Fulton County. It identified two preferred size options — 90 rooms or 120 rooms..

A 90-room hotel, which county officials say may be the preferred size, is expected to generate about \$3 million in gross revenue in year one. The figure would be up to \$4.3 million by year five, the study said.

The study found that the largest generator of hotel “room nights” in the area include the Walleye Challenge, Great Sacandaga Lake and Saratoga Springs in the summer months. The report adds: *“Hamilton and Montgomery counties do not currently offer any significant meetings pace. There is opportunity for Fulton County to attract events from these surrounding counties with larger function space.”*

County Planning Director Scott Henze was asked Tuesday what's the next step, on the heels of the commissioned study. He said members of the county Board of Supervisors must now determine whether the study's findings are to be tested.

"It basically wrapped up," Henze said. "I think it's just in their hands. If they want to do something with it, they can."

Northampton Supervisor James Groff, board chairman, added Tuesday: *"Right now, we're pretty much done. It's more of a background thing for us."*

But if there is a barometer to test whether the hotel feasibility study can come to fruition, he said it is with the county's planned Vail Mills development area.

Groff said the county is working on that project and will *"see where it leads."*

The Board of Supervisors recently conducted a public hearing related to a report completed last November on Sewer District No. 2 completed by Environmental Design Partnership LLP of Clifton Park, N.Y.

Supervisors have set a \$1.3 million sewer project for the Vail Mills area. The project includes a gravity sewer, pump station and force main, and engineering and construction services. The plan is to create a sewer collection system and sewer district in an area around Routes 29 and 30 in Vail Mills.

The Vail Mills development area proposal shows 455 acres, with 60 residential lots. It would include: 50,000 square feet of retail space, 132,000 square feet of commercial office space, adult senior housing, single family homes and apartments, as well as a potential hotel, with greenspace and park land.

Hunden Strategic Partners' finished study said much work awaits before a new hotel is built in the county.

Next steps in the hotel demand investigation include: identifying sites, obtaining options, preparing and distributing requests for qualifications to developers, review qualifications, prepare and distribute a request for proposal, review and evaluate proposals, negotiate, select developer, extend municipal infrastructure to the site, and actual construction of the hotel.

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