

Chipley receives \$440K grant for infrastructure improvements



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By CAROL KENT

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The City of Chipley hopes to use a \$440,000 Northwest Florida Water Management District (NWFWD) grant to encourage economic development in Washington County.

The funding is part of about \$10 million recently approved by the NWFWD and will be used mainly for the planning and engineering of utility expansion south of Interstate 10.

“Our goal is to provide water, sewer and gas south of the interstate to help promote job growth out there,” said Dan Miner, Chipley City Administrator.

“When the economy was rolling pretty good a few years ago, we had a lot of interest in that area (from potential industry), but (lack of infrastructure) was one of the snags, and we just didn’t have the funding to make that happen.”

Miner says the city’s request to the agency was “a little different” than simply a list of why the grant was needed.

“We approached it like the movie ‘Field of Dreams’,” said Miner. “We told them, ‘If we have (the infrastructure) out there, they will come.’” Miner also pointed out new industry would mean new jobs for Washington County and surrounding areas.

Miner also stressed the \$440,000 grant is just the beginning of a larger project.

“Ultimately, this will be about a \$5.9 million project, and the (NWFWD) grant won’t fund everything we’re wanting to do,” he explained. “We’ve also applied for a \$1.5 million Community Block Issue Request (CBIR) grant and plan to just phase the project out and do what we can.”

The next step for the project is for the city to advertise for planners, engineers and designers who can help develop a strategy.

“It could be about five years worth of work, but we hope to go to work on it by the end of the year,” he said.