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Delegation supports revitalization of abandoned chicken plant site

Plans to turn an abandoned chicken plant site into an asset for the community received support Monday, May 9, from members of the Limestone County Legislative Delegation.

The members presented community grants totaling \$26,967.50 to the City of Athens toward the playground/splash pad phase on the Pryor Street side of the site. The City is seeking additional grant funding for this phase.

“We appreciate our senators and representatives seeing the importance of turning 32 acres of an eyesore and safety concern that’s located in the middle of a neighborhood and near educational facilities into a park and residential/retail attraction,” Mayor Ronnie Marks said.

In 2009, Pilgrim’s Pride closed the processing plant and abandoned it, leaving behind empty buildings, concrete containers with stagnant water, tanks and office space. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management conducted Phase 1 and 2 environmental studies at no cost to the City and determined no site remediation was necessary. The City did hire a contractor to safely remove all asbestos from the buildings before they were demolished.

A series of community meetings led residents to share ideas for a park such as walking and biking trails, splash pad, dog park and amphitheater. The City plans to start with the splash pad and playground area. That phase, along with the entrance, is estimated at \$950,000 to \$1 million. The City is working on a proposal to Dekko Foundation regarding part of that cost.

“Support from the delegation, ADEM and other avenues we’re pursuing will help us when we approach Dekko,” Marks said.

The delegation members who presented community grants were:

- Sen. Tim Melson - \$20,000
- Sen. Tom Butler - \$3,000
- Sen. Arthur Orr - \$2,967.50
- Rep. Mac McCutcheon - \$1,000

Rep. Danny Crawford, who lives in Athens, said he plans to present a community grant as well.

The City is currently getting site work done on the property.