

[print](#)

Voters Ok redevelopment powers

by Joel Martin, Senior writer

07.21.10 - 09:14 am

Voters in Tuesday's primaries approved referendums that grant redevelopment powers to Troup County, LaGrange and Hogansville.

"I'd like to thank the citizens of Troup County for supporting this very important economic development tool," County Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe said Tuesday night.

West Point approved the measure last year.

The county referendum passed by a margin of 54 percent, with 2,949 voting yes and 2,511 no. It passed in LaGrange with 64 percent of the vote, 1,354 to 760, and in Hogansville with 70 percent, 191-83.

Under the state's Redevelopment Powers Law, local governments with voter approval can create tax allocation districts as an incentive for retail and housing development that might not otherwise happen.

Eligible projects would pay existing taxes on the property, but could use the additional tax revenue generated by the development to finance a bond issue that would pay for infrastructure and other up-front costs. Once the bond issue is retired after 20 or 30 years, the local governments would get the full tax benefit.

"Certainly in no way does it guarantee we'll have significant retail development in our community any time soon, but it sure does give us a significant advantage over other communities," Wolfe said.

He said it was more important that the referendum pass in the cities since it would be "difficult, if not impossible," to create a tax allocation district or TAD in the unincorporated area because the law is aimed at blighted areas and sewer deficiencies.

"Since the county has no blight and no ownership in sewer, it's very unlikely any area in the unincorporated area would meet the criteria," Wolfe said.

Patrick Crews, who led a "Troup Together" campaign in support of the referendums, said, "We tried to get the information out to the voters so they could make an informed decision."

Wolfe said retail development is needed to reduce Troup's high unemployment rate and keep sales tax dollars here. He said millions in taxes are being lost to Newnan, Auburn, Ala., and north Columbus.

A nonbinding referendum on the Republican ballot passed with 82 percent of the vote or 3,177 to 690. It asked whether the Georgia Constitution should be amended "to provide that the paramount right to life is vested in each human being from their earliest biological beginning until natural death."

Joel Martin can be reached at jmartin@lagrangenews.com or (706) 884-7311, Ext. 235.

© lagrangenews.com 2010