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Major development in north Lafayette cleared

By Mike Hasten mhasten@gannett.com

BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana Bond Commission has cleared the way for a major retail development in a deserted area of north Lafayette along Interstate 10 at Louisiana Avenue.

Commission members rebuffed an attempt by State Treasurer John Kennedy, chairman of the commission, to force Stirling Properties, the developers of the shopping center, to put up a portion of the cost of building a service road to the shopping area.

“I’m worried about the precedent of the developer not having to put up anything” to provide access to the site, Kennedy said. The roadway is to be constructed with future tax revenues to be produced by shopping center sales — 1-cent sales tax from the state and 1-cent tax from the city of Lafayette.

Chip Songy, executive vice president for Stirling, said his company and investors already are guaranteeing the bonds being sold to construct the shopping center and if the tax revenues are not sufficient to pay the anticipated \$8 million cost of providing a service road, they will pay that cost.

“We’re taking all the risk on the upside,” Songy said. Financial projections for the center are tight and “this is close to being a deal we can’t afford to do.”

“If this was the other side of town, we wouldn’t be here,” Lafayette Mayor-President Joey Durel told the commission.

He said giving up a portion of tax revenue that the parish would otherwise not receive is a good deal because “we’re going to start a service road that we wouldn’t have.” Also, utilities are being extended to the area, which could draw additional retail activity to the area.