

CONSULTANT TO HELP WITH RAIL PARK DEAL

September 15, 2013 at 5:00 am | By TOM LOTSHAW/The Daily Inter Lake

Denied a federal grant to help develop the Flathead County Rail Park, the Flathead County Economic Development Authority is hiring a consultant to try to “structure a deal” with CHS Kalispell to relocate there.

“FCEDA board members believe that until we have that step completed, there really isn’t any reason to look at engineering any more in depth than we already have,” Executive Director Kellie Danielson said.

The organization plans to hire Willdan Financial Services of Temecula, Calif.

Willdan completed a market analysis and feasibility study for Kalispell’s redevelopment goals and opportunities in its railroad corridor.

CHS Kalispell and Northwest Drywall and Roofing are the last two businesses in Kalispell that rely on the railroad spur that runs through the city.

Relocating those businesses to the new Flathead County Rail Park would let the city pull out the tracks and redevelop a large, languishing area in the city’s core.

Flathead County Rail Park is located at the former McElroy & Wilken gravel pit, a 40-acre site that sits east of Whitefish Stage Road. The Flathead County Economic Development Authority purchased the property in 2012 with money from a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

The Flathead County Economic Development Authority and Willdan Financial Services will start working with CHS Kalispell first to see if a deal can be structured to relocate.

“Northwest Drywall is not nearly as complicated as CHS, so we don’t really feel like we need a financial adviser to help us with that right now. It’s just not as complex a deal. Once we get CHS figured out, then we will start working with Northwest Drywall,” Danielson said.

She added: “We’ll be identifying all the sources of funds and the players that can be part of this deal and how to structure it to make it happen and meet the needs of both parties, FCEDA and CHS.”

Reporter Tom Lotshaw may be reached at 758-4483 or by email at tlotshaw@dailyinterlake.com.