

"This project has been in the works for several years," said Wagoner, whose company handles engineering issues for Lowe's. "It hasn't been the easiest project to move forward."

"We've certainly had our fair share of real estate issues," he said.

Wagoner said that Lowe's real estate committee identifies potential properties for store construction. A team of engineers then determines the potential store's access to utilities.

The real estate team then makes a decision of whether a store will be built in that community, Wagoner said.

"The real estate committee approved this project last October," he said. "Closing is scheduled for February, but prior to closing this project will have to go back before the real estate committee for final approval."

"We certainly can't

promise you anything, but as far as we know, we've got approval to move forward with this project," he said.

The Lowe's project is the exception to the rule in terms of county projects receiving sewer service.

The City Council has instructed the mayor, city manager and city attorney that no sewer services can be provided within the county until the city receives financial assistance from the county and the Towns County Water & Sewer Authority.

"The city will need to allocate or assign sewer capacity from the city's reserves for future growth within the city,"

City Manager Rick Stancil said.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall said that he hopes to sit down soon with officials from the city of Hiawassee and the city of Young Harris and discuss a long-term service delivery strategy.

"It took me a while to get here, but I'm here and I'm loving it," Barber said.

Barber said The Oaks will offer plenty to those who enjoy a little finer meal.

"Not something that you can find in just any restaurant," he said.

The Oaks will specialize in the classic style of fine dining, serving steaks, seafood and specialty cuisine. It also will offer a menu for "folks who just plain like food."

"It'll be a casual, fine dining experience," Barber said. "Folks can come here, feel comfortable and enjoy a good meal."

The Oaks will offer a menu specific to the season, Barber said.

"The Oaks will be simple, laid back, casual and pleasurable," Barber said. "I'm excited. I've walked right into a very busy season, but the incredible staff here has made it a smooth transition for me."

Barber also is making an impact 3295 Dogwood Lane, now known as Cafe Portofino in Hiawassee.

Barber has created the menu for the restaurant that prides itself in offering an Old World adventure, complete with a Tuscan atmosphere.

"We're definitely excited about the newest eating opportunities in Towns County," Hooper said. "We're very excited about the quality and atmosphere at both The Oaks and Cafe Portofino."

recently negotiated a waiver of a \$40,000 fine imposed on the Clay-Towns Authority by the state Environmental Protection Division. The fine was passed along when the Towns Development Authority assumed control of the former Clay-Towns Authority property.

The property also has recently undergone a facelift with county workers completing the landscape scheme within the park on Industrial Boulevard.

"The park is really taking shape," Chairman Phillips said. "We're now in a position to do what we're supposed to do, which is help bring jobs to Towns County."