

# McHenry Wal-Mart moving to Johnsburg?

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JOHNSBURG – One mile could mean the difference between hundreds of jobs and thousands of tax dollars in Johnsburg and McHenry after the announcement Tuesday that Wal-Mart is planning to open a new Supercenter at Route 31 and Running Brook Farm Boulevard. The new store would be a little more than a mile north of the current Wal-Mart in McHenry, with that store closing to consolidate operations in a new 175,000-square-foot building that could open by early summer of 2010.

“This is a relocation of the store in McHenry,” Wal-Mart Manager of Public Affairs B. John Bisio said. “The associates at the [McHenry] store will work at the new store.” The 116,000-square-foot McHenry store employs about 200 workers, and an additional 180 jobs will be created at the new location, Bisio said. “We need a larger footprint for the Wal-Mart concept store of today,” Bisio said.

Johnsburg village trustee John Huemann said the village had been in talks with Wal-Mart for about 18 months on the move, and that the company had submitted preliminary plans to the village.

“It speaks to the entire corridor; obviously Wal-Mart is a very important part to the success of the corridor, but that corridor has been planned for more than 15 years,” Huemann said. “It’s a real testimony to the forethought of all the people who have been heavily involved in the process.”

Bisio said that official plans from Wal-Mart were expected to be submitted to the planning commission in the next four to six weeks. “The overall plan is to keep up with our timeline of having the permit process done by the end of the summer and to break ground in the fall,” Bisio said.

The announcement came as a surprise to

McHenry Mayor Susan Low. Reached by cell phone while she was shopping at the McHenry Wal-Mart, Low said she had not talked with Johnsburg village officials about Wal-Mart for two years.

“I haven’t talked to anyone,” she said. “It’s news to me.”

Huemann said the village had gotten cooperation with the city on building the Route 31 corridor, specifically noting the benefits of the recently opened Olive Garden restaurant. “We have worked in unison with the city of McHenry, and have been pretty good partners with each other,” he said. “The corridor is a benefit to both communities.”

Wal-Mart operates five stores in McHenry County, along with one Sam’s Club outlet, and employs about 1,700 people.

A sixth location is slated to open in Huntley by the end of April.

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