



**HOSPICE BUILDING SITS VACANT, UNFINISHED CAUSING EYESORE**

## Community Leaders Seek Answers from Hospice Group

By KATHY MUDD

A number of community leaders, including commissioners-elect, city councilpersons and others met with Dr. Pete Lee and George West of Doctor's Hospice West of Doctor's Hospice at the home of Rep. Susan Holmes recently to discuss the unfinished building on Eatonton Street.

The ground was broken for the hospice inpatient facility in October, 2011, and in April officials reported that the building would be complete in 60-90 days. At the meeting, the community leaders wanted answers, as Dr. Lee and Mr. West said construction is 60-65 days from completion.

Dr. Lee explained that when they began the project they had foreign investors interested in the project, but that the hold-up was the EB-5, which is an immigration department measure whereby foreign investors can receive a visa. He said there had been a big delay in some applicants being qualified.

Dr. Lee and Mr. West said

the hold-up on completion of the building is the financing. Those present suggested that they seek conventional financing rather than waiting on the EB-5 money, and the hospice owners were receptive to attempting that, although saying that they thought the EB-5 investors were going to be approved any time now.

The community leaders expressed their dismay at the way the facility looks at this time, and questioned when, or if, it would open. Mr. West explained the percentage of home patients needed to justify staffing the building, and indicated the hospice does not have that yet.

He said currently there is not a "Certificate of Need" requirement from the state for hospice facilities, but that it would come, and that's when they could foreseeably expect to have enough patients for the facility.

Dr. Lee and Mr. West were encouraged to do whatever they must to clean the place up. Rep. Holmes said the



### SIGN PROMISES COMING SOON

way it looks now is "disgusting." Paul Holmes asked the hospice officials if they were about hospice or about immigration.

The hospice officials assured everyone they are in the hospice business and spoke of their success in Riverdale and Fayetteville.

They explained that all facilities are under the same umbrella, but that they are licensed as Doctor's Hospice in Riverdale, covering a 60 mile radius, and as Agape Hospice in Macon, covering a 60-mile radius.

Discussion got heated at times, with the closing being

the community reaching out to the hospice personnel with the question, "What do you need for us as a community to do?" to move this building forward.

The hospice people said they would consider trying to get a short term loan to get the building finished. Rep. Holmes suggested the group meet back in March to plan a grand opening.

Joel Gaston who was in attendance commented on the unprecedented meeting, with the various personnel and agencies coming together to ensure this becomes a positive for the community.