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'Future roads' plan worries neighbors in rural pocket

Officials insist guidelines aren't proposals

By Andrea Uhde • auhde@courier-journal.com • April 28, 2010

A group of residents who live in one of Oldham's more rural areas said they plan to fight a proposal they fear would allow high-traffic roads in their area.

Sharon Hancock King and her neighbors said they are concerned about the impact of the Planning and Zoning Commission's "proposed future roads" plan, which Oldham planners caution is only a planning tool and is not definite.

King said her family farm, Holiday Farm off Shiloh Lane, has historic features including a possible Indian burial ground. Still, a road is proposed through the land, she said.

"Do we not take this into consideration when we consider a road?" she asked members of the planning commission's study and review committee during its April 21 meeting.

Member Dennis Deibel said those features would be considered, and he stressed that a road would never be built there unless the property owners wanted it.

More than 25 people attended the meeting, and most of them opposed the future roads proposal, which the Planning and Zoning Commission likely will consider on May 25. If approved, the plan would be added to the county's comprehensive plan, which is a guidebook for growth.

The plan is called the Road Classification and Proposed Future Roads and is a planning tool the county is required to have, said Louise Allen with planning and development services.

"It's not an anti-development plan; it's not a pro-development plan; it's a responsible development plan," Allen said.

The "proposed future roads" portion outlines a number of possible roads, but it's the ones that were recently added that residents say they worry about. Those include a connector road between Shiloh Lane and North Buckeye Lane and a connector between Ky. 1694 and Ky. 393. A full list is available at www.oldhamcounty.net.

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The purpose of the plan is to ensure that if a property owner sells his or her land to a developer, the developer would build a road that would handle the additional traffic, Allen said.

She said the county has been working on updates to the plan for more than a year. The transportation plan was last updated in 2003, and the county is required to update it every five years, she said.

Kevin Dant with URS consulting company worked on the proposed changes and said he focused on properties that were 20 acres or more because those areas are more likely to have large developments in the future. He said he tried to avoid areas with bad terrain or agricultural or conservation easements. He said all the road lines on the proposed map are conceptual.

“We want to be sure we do it right,” said committee chairman Kevin Jeffries. “We certainly don’t want the community to feel like we’re trying to rush through this.”

Bill Landes of Liberty Lane said one of the proposed roads would cut through his land.

“Why can’t we proceed with these roads on a case-by-case basis?” he asked. “You said this is only a line on the map, but that’s the devil.”

He said he feared that anyone interested in buying his land would be scared away by

the possibility of a road.

Stuart Ulferts, the attorney for the committee, stressed that only the owner of that property could build a road, so no roads would be built unless the landowner wanted one.

Ulferts said if a developer buys the land, it would be more difficult to require the developer to construct an adequate road without a plan like the one being considered.

“This is the best way to put our expectations on notice for future developers,” he said.

The study and review committee recommended some changes to the plan before sending it to the commission. It asked that the commission look into whether the proposed road from the north side of Interstate 71 to Ky. 329 conflicts with the Brownsboro master plan, a planning tool for that area. Committee members also deleted the lines for the

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roads from Ky. 1694 to Ky. 393 and from Shiloh Lane to North Buckeye Lane — the roads many residents opposed. “I believe it would have such a negative effect on the property values in these areas that it should be stricken from the plan,” committee member Joyce Albertsen said.

But the committee kept the text that called for a road in that area.

After the meeting, Bill Landes' wife, Sally, said she felt better that the road lines were removed.

“It's a start,” she said.

Janie Parker, the sister of Sharon King, said the change was “smoke and mirrors.”

“It's a way to keep the buck from stopping with them” and pass it to the planning commission, she said.

Reporter Andrea Uhde can be reached at (502) 582-4663.

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