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Zoning commissioners to revisit question over 3-school campus

Opponents dispute plan's compliance

By Sara Cunningham • scunningham@courier-journal.com • January 19, 2011

Oldham planning and zoning commissioners are expected to revisit this question Tuesday: Does the school board's plan to build a three-school campus on land it owns in the Brownsboro area off Ky. 329 comply with the county's comprehensive plan?

Commissioners spent nearly three hours during their Dec. 14 meeting hearing from school district staff and community members, but they decided to defer making any decisions because they said they didn't have enough information.

The district bought the 95 acres, which is near Halls Hill and Glenarm roads, in Oct. 2009 for about \$2.7 million with the intention of building a campus. The idea is to help alleviate overcrowding in schools such as Goshen Elementary at Hillcrest and to address the future growth expected by the district in that area of the county, school officials have said.

But a group of residents who live near the property have been vocal about their disagreement with the school district, saying they are worried about how the new schools would affect traffic flow and utilities. They have also argued that there's no need for new schools since student

population growth has slowed the past couple of years.

"This isn't really about a school in our backyard. It's about, in our view, the improper expenditure of tax dollars and this is just not a good location," said Gary Keibler, a resident who has spoken in opposition to the plan during several public meetings.

School board attorney Anne Coorsen has said the district is required by the Kentucky Department of Education to present information and get approval on those types of issues before even buying property.

Coorsen said the commissioners requested copies of the information the district sent to the state to get approval, and the district has since provided all of the information commissioners requested during their Dec. 14 meeting.

Opponents also have said they think the school district's plans do not comply with

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the Brownsboro Master Plan, a document put together by county officials and community members that include guidelines for development.

Oldham County Planning and Zoning Commission meeting

When: 9 a.m. Tuesday
Where: Fiscal Court Building, 100 W. Jefferson St., La Grange

The plan asked for schools to be built in the Norton Commons and Glen Oaks area or near Brownsboro Towne Center. There was no land available near the first area and the land the district plans to build on is as close to the second area as they could get.

“We feel like we're in compliance. It seems like they basically don't want a school there and nothing we're going to say is going to change their minds.”

Coorsen also said the plan before the commission is just a master plan for the campus, not building plans.

“We're still a couple years away from having a completed elementary school and many years away from having an actual completed campus with a middle school and a high school,” Coorsen said. “We will have to present more plans before anything is actually built. The district just has to have an idea of how everything might fit, and that's what this is.”

Coorsen and Jim Urban, director of planning and development services, said the district can legally move forward with plans no matter what the commissioners decide Tuesday.

Reporter Sara Cunningham can be reached at (502) 582-4335.

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