

Plans for Brownsboro campus bring heated debate

By Brent Schanding

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Concrete details are vital for the future of a proposed Brownsboro school campus, and Oldham planning and zoning commissioners will defer their decision on the three-school project until at least January. After nearly three hours of eyeing graphs, charts and architectural renderings and hearing testimony about the multi-million dollar project, a number of commissioners said they still lacked adequate information about it.

“The school board has not done a good job in listening to the community,” said commissioner Tom Henrion, who appeared poised Tuesday to defeat the plan. “We should send a message today to that affect.”

Instead, district school officials are required to submit additional details — including traffic studies, road improvement plans and a cost-analysis of its proposed Brownsboro campus.

A vote on the matter will take place in January.

The Brownsboro campus — slated for construction off Ky. 329 — could eventually house an elementary, middle and high school and serve as many as 2,850 Oldham County students.

For the past two years, a number of Brownsboro neighbors have decried preliminary plans for a 95-acre campus, saying the proposed site can't handle increased traffic.

A new campus isn't necessary, they further contend, because student-population projections have remained largely stagnant.

Opponents also question if campus construction would violate the Brownsboro Master Plan — a set of guidelines, which largely advocates for rural preservation and controlled growth. The plan requires that any future school construction occur only in high-density areas to minimize student busing.

Many Brownsboro neighbors cite traffic concerns and question if Ky. 329 and narrower county roads could accommodate increased traffic — especially the influx of school buses.

“I know we're perceived as the enemy here,” said Barb McMakin, an opponent of the plan who lives on Glennarm Road “But bottom line: It comes down to the kids. Do we want to subject them to roads that possibly can't be brought up to snuff?”

It's unclear how road widening and improvements can be paid for because state transportation officials have not earmarked funds for those projects. But long-range infrastructure concerns can be addressed during the 30- to 40-year campus development, say district officials.

“Students are already traveling these roads by buses,” added Anne Coorssen, an attorney for Oldham County Schools. “This won't put students in any jeopardy, they aren't in already, because of narrow roads.” District officials say they scouted the most viable location for the campus and legally secured the \$2.7 million site, despite those critics who claim the deal was cloaked in secrecy.

A state audit suggests the district has so far obtained proper approval for the construction.

"I think citizens are being heard," said Gary Keibler, who opposes the Brownsboro campus. The Brownsboro resident owns a 22-acre sheep farm on Old Zaring Road, less than a mile from the proposed campus, and said he believes planners would've likely defeated the proposal, if it advanced for a vote.

After testifying about the plan, Keibler said he's encouraged that planners are demanding more disclosure from school officials before taking action.

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