



GOVERNMENT, THE NEIGHBORHOOD FILES

Chapman Hearing Continued to Next PZC Meeting

The Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission drew a large crowd Monday for a hearing on a zone change that could be the gateway for a new apartment complex on Route 83.

By **Caitlin Francis** March 1, 2011

Residents turned out in droves Monday night for the Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission's hearing on a zoning designation change that could lead to a new apartment complex on Route 83.

The apartment buildings would possibly be located in the area of West, Sunset and Stein roads, with the primary access off of West Road.

During the hearing commission members, the applicant and residents discussed a conceptual plan for the site that showed 22 buildings and 172 apartments, just under the allowed maximum building capacity.

Although many focused on the possible project to be built in the 34.94 acre site, the real issue at hand was the zone change necessary to allow for such a plan to even be proposed and considered.

Matthew Chapman submitted an application to the commission asking it to change the zoning designation of the property from commercial and residential land to one that allows for multi-family residential development. There is no multi-family zone in Ellington, which is why the application to change the zone is necessary.

Before the public hearing segment of the agenda regarding the zone change began, Chairman Arlo Hoffman reminded the crowd to be open-minded and patient.

"We will listen patiently while the applicant makes their presentation...then as we did in the other hearings, we will open it up for public comment," Hoffman said. "We're open-minded. We like to hear the whole story."

Dory Famiglietti spoke on behalf of Chapman, the applicant. She asked Ellington residents to "disregard any prior relationships" they might have and listen to their analysis without judgment.

Don Poland, a consultant for the applicant, also spoke on behalf of Chapman's zone-change application. He listed the reasons why the apartment complex would be a great opportunity for the town to grow and develop, including the "character of the district" and the "appropriate use of land."

Poland also described the criteria Ellington needs to rezone land as multi-family as "lots in excess of five acres," which Chapman's application fits.

"Housing is an investment in the community," Poland said.

As Poland's analysis of the zone change continued, residents grew restless with the amount of time the applicant's representatives were allowed to speak and expressed their tiredness of Poland's analysis as he attempted to make his case. Early in the meeting Howard had suggested a 10 p.m. time limit for discussion and residents were anxious to have a chance to state their opinions.

Poland was allowed to continue, and he wrapped up by saying Ellington has the opportunity to be "intentional and proactive" in development of the town and its economy.

Ultimately a time limit was enforced, but commission members chose to continue the hearing on Chapman's application for a zone change until the March PZC meeting to allow for more testimony. Residents did get a small amount of time to express their concerns and frustrations with the proposal Monday night, though.

Countless spoke against the proposal, with much of their testimony followed by cheers and applause by the rest of the crowd. Common issues throughout the hearing included controlling population growth in town, traffic and quality of schools. Many who spoke felt their lifestyle would be threatened if another large complex was added to the small town.

Louis Corcino presented the PZC with two petitions. He also spent time trying to persuade the PZC to reject the application for a zone change.

Residents also reiterated their love of the town, and their desire to preserve its character and heritage. One man discussed the town emblem, and the corn stalks that adorn it. He said the people of the town put their trust and faith in the town government, and the people don't want to lose what the town represents, like the corn stalks.

One woman said, "We're talking about Ellington, we're talking about our town!"

A former owner of the Ellington Supermarket did not share his opinion on the zoning change request or the project, but he urged the people to form an opposition group, and to look into getting their own experts and to doing their own studies. He told everyone to get involved if they wanted to make an impact.

What are your thoughts on the potential apartment complex? Tell us in the comments.



PHOTOS (3)



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