

Decision enables industry in future

Officials: Development likely for Ohio 63 portion

By CHRIS DUMOND
BUTLER COUNTY BUREAU

HAMILTON — The Butler County Planning Commission ruled in opposition to the St. Clair Township Zoning Commission Tuesday afternoon in a case commissioners said will be important to preserving an industrial corridor for the future extension of Ohio 63 westward.

Although the land in question is about a mile south of the planned extension of the highway, the parcel is sandwiched between a rail line and the Miller brewery. It is one of many transportation planners expect to develop if the Ohio 63 project ever gets off the ground.

Commissioner Don Dixon said rezoning the undeveloped 152-acre tract from manufacturing use to agricultural use could spoil surrounding land for future industrial development. In a tied vote, Dixon and fellow planning commissioners Michael McNeil and Robert Bierly voted against a motion to approve the rezoning. Under commission procedures, a tied vote is the same as a vote against the motion.

Katherine Allen, daughter of the owner of the parcel, said planners have told development tales for decades. Allen said her family would like the land, located on the west side of Gephart Road just south of Hawkins Road, returned to agricultural uses so they may one day add other family homes.

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Ohio 63

Commissioners deny rezoning

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"We've been told for years and years and years that this property was going to be developed," she said. "Thirty years ago, they told us the bypass was going to come through here from Bypass 4."

Although he said the parcel is directly across the Miller property, St. Clair Township Zoning Administrator Jerry Lanich said he doesn't believe it's suitable for industrial development because of poor access on Gephart Road and the absence of public water lines.

Dixon, also a member of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District Board of Trustees, responded that although the planned extension of Ohio 63 from Ohio 4 to U.S. 127 may be many years in the future, utilities could easily be laid on the property and that the parcel is important to the entire area's development prospects.

"If you pull this piece out of our zone up there, you've virtually destroyed that for any big planned development ... You have to consider the impact of that piece on the pieces around it," he said.

No one, he added, is going to want to build an industrial park around a hog farm. Likewise, he said, no one is going to want to live there if manufacturing facilities build up around it. He said township trustees showed foresight by zoning the corridor for industrial and commercial uses rather than letting it build up with houses. Dixon said they could be making a mistake to go back on the plan now.

"Then journalize the corridor and let's don't have what happened in Monroe," Lanich responded, citing one highway alignment that was stymied by a residential development. "The regional highway was journalized for 25 years before it ever became a reality and that prevented any development."

Because St. Clair Township has its own zoning authority, the final decision on whether to rezone the land rests with the trustees.

Contact **Chris Dumond** at (513) 820-2025, or e-mail him at cdumond@coxohio.com.

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