

Developer's request goes back for review
Revised version is aim to quell opposition to original plan

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WALKERTOWN

The saga of the proposed McDonald's restaurant and Walgreens took another twist last week when the town council voted to return the project to the town's planning board for more review.

Developer Michael Kelley had revised his plan for the property, which stands at the southwest corner of N.C. 66 and U.S. 158 at Walkertown's busiest intersection. Kelley recently held a neighborhood meeting to explain his plans to residents.

Kelley said he was not expecting the council to take action on the rezoning request because the town's planning staff must review the changes.

The council held a public hearing on the project last Thursday. Most speakers were critical of the project.

"I am concerned that it is not a suitable site," said Coleman Alderson, who owns property on Bellaire Circle. "I can say this site is overcrowded and has poor access, especially for delivery vehicles that will come in there."

Alderson said that Martin Street isn't wide enough to accommodate the extra traffic the businesses would bring. The corner lot would have access to Martin Street at the rear of the businesses.

Chuck Anas, who lives on Annie Lane, said that the roadwork associated with the project would make it harder for him to drive around. Plans call for a raised median on N.C. 66.

The median would prevent drivers on the northern section of Martin Street from turning left onto N.C. 66. Annie Lane connects to Martin Street.

Anas said that the traffic changes would force him to turn right on to N.C. 66, then left onto Darrow Road, left again onto U.S. 158 and right on N.C. 66, if he wants to get on N.C. 66 heading toward Kernersville.

Anas also criticized the idea of allowing U-turns at the intersection of U.S. 158 and N.C. 66 for drivers who are going eastbound on U.S. 158. The U-turns would allow those drivers to get to the McDonald's or Walgreens.

Kelley told the council that he has arranged a meeting between council members and officials with the N.C. Department of Transportation to discuss the traffic at the intersection.

Kelley said that reducing the speed on U.S. 158 to 45 mph through town might be "something to think about."

Marilyn Martin, a planning-board member, said that the corner was supposed to be used for offices or less intense types of development than the one proposed because of the proximity of a residential neighborhood.

"I would like to see McDonald's and Walgreens, but I'd like to see them as good neighbors and not just irritating traffic," Martin said.

Peggy Leight, a planning-board member, asked the panel to reconsider the project. That's what council members did on a unanimous vote after they discussed it.

Council Member Brenda Mabe said that little had changed in the plan to resolve her problems with it, but she did not oppose giving the planning-board a second look at it.

"The size is no larger, and the traffic is no smaller," Mabe said. "My feeling is that this is not the location for this type of business."

In other business, the council approved a new annexation agreement with Kernersville that outlines areas for future annexation.

The council also decided to buy lots next to the town hall from Gant Oil Co. for \$45,000. The town eventually will use two lots that have soil contamination as a parking lot. Two other lots have no contamination and may be used for any purpose.

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