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Neighbors voice opposition to rezoning land on Troy Pike for residential development

By **BOB VLACH**
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

A public hearing on a request to rezone 22.5 acres on Troy Pike for residential development became an opportunity for neighbors and others to sound the alarm about residential growth in Versailles, specifically on the south side of town. “If we are not careful to wisely preserve the character of this community, we could jeopardize the very reason why many of us choose to live here,” said Penelope Evans. She said she and her husband moved here from Lexington in 2008 to get away from the constant traffic gridlock. She said it’s “time to press the pause button before making significant decisions regarding the future of our town,” until the Comprehensive Plan has been updated and approved. “We need to know when enough is enough—especially as we choose the locations for more housing,” said Kathy Crook, who lives in the Cedar Ridge neighborhood located south of the proposed residential neighborhood at 1470 Troy Pike. The proposed subdivision is located inside the Versailles urban service boundary, and is designated as a contemporary neighborhood land use in the current Comprehensive Plan. It has been identified as future residential since 1977, said Planning Director Steve Hunter during the hearing on May 8. The Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission took no action following the hearing in order to consider the evidence and testimony presented.

Many who spoke voiced concern about adding traffic to what they described as an already congested Troy Pike. When the developer’s attorney, Scott Schuette, said their traffic study showed the proposed development would have no impact on Troy Pike, laughter and comments from audience members caused commission Chair Patty Perry to use her gavel. Schuette then clarified that the 22 townhouses and 62 single-family houses being proposed would have no impact on the level of service of Troy Pike.

“If you travel this area in the morning and/or in the evening, you don’t need a traffic study to know what the congestion already is,” said Fred Powers. Added Frank Stark, who said he lives in the Stourbridge neighborhood, “It’s unbelievable the amount of time that we spend sitting there waiting to turn onto ... Troy Pike. And I can’t imagine adding these additional homes that there’s not going (to) be even more and more and more traffic problems and accidents ...”

John Sorman described the rezoning request as premature from an infrastructure standpoint because Troy Pike needs turn lanes to handle traffic volumes. He said improvements have not been approved by the state Transportation Cabinet, so he urged the commission to reject the zone change.

Neighbors also voiced concern about developing land in an area with storm-water drainage issues, and questioned the size of the letters on a sign posted to inform the public of the hearing on the zone change request from A-1 agriculture to R-4 high-density residential, arguing the posted sign did not comply with state law. Hunter later told the commission that the sign complied with size requirements.

Held in the third-floor courtroom of the Woodford County Courthouse, over 50 people signed up to speak during the hearing. Schuette, who represented developer Jihad Hallany (Vision Engineering, LLC), began the hearing by telling the commission that the development was being scaled back and no longer included apartments to address neighbor concerns. The original development plan included 227 apartment units, which have been removed in the revised plan in response to what neighbors told the developer. Schuette said he and



A LARGE CROWD turned out for a May 8 public hearing held by the Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission to discuss a request to rezone 22.5 acres on Troy Pike for a residential neighborhood. (Photo by Scott White)

Hallany met with neighbors after asking the commission to continue the hearing on April 10 so they could discuss their concerns.

In addition to removing apartment buildings from the plan, Schuette said density caps have been placed on the revised plan. So if the property was sold, the new owner would have to adhere to those caps (22 townhomes and 62 single-family lots) unless they file a new application to explain what has changed to remove those conditions, he told the commission.

Concerns were raised by neighbors about rezoning the A-1 land to R-4. A high-density zone was requested in order to develop a mixed-housing neighborhood because planned unit developments (PUDs) are no longer an option as an overlay in residential zones.

Also, as explained by Hunter in his staff report, the second phase of the residential development (44 of the 62 single-family lots) cannot move forward until road improvements, including a turn lane, have been completed on Troy Pike.

During his presentation of the plan, Schuette said the single-family and townhouse lots in this neighborhood will provide middle-income houses priced at \$200,000 to \$600,000, which he described as a missing market in Woodford County.

“This is protecting your rural community by developing inside the urban service boundary,” said Schuette, noting the Comprehensive Plan shows this property as being a future residential use.

After the May 8 hearing was opened, Commissioner Chris Sharp told the other commissioners that he had attended the meeting that the developer had with residents. Because of concerns voiced to him about whether attending the meeting was appropriate, he asked if the applicant or anyone on the commission wanted him to not participate in the hearing and vote on the request. No concern was expressed, so Sharp did not recuse himself from participation.

A recommendation by the commission will go to Versailles City Council, which will approve or deny the Troy Pike zone change request.

In-family conveyance changes presented; action tabled for public comment

By **BOB VLACH**
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Planning Director Steve Hunter presented a summary of amendments to the ordinance regulating in-family land conveyances on May 8, and then the Versailles-Midway-Woodford County Planning Commission opened a public hearing. The commission voted to table action in order to give the public time to comment on the changes over the next couple of months.

The draft for a proposed text amendment to Article VII will add in-family conveyance lots as a conditional use in the A-1 agricultural district. A public hearing to hear those requests will be held by the Board of Adjustments, Hunter explained.

The revised language was based on directives from the Woodford Fiscal Court, which voted to reject a proposed text amendment to Article VII of the zoning ordinance that was recommended by the commission last December, Hunter told commissioners.

He said among the provisions in the revised in-family conveyance ordinance from the Fiscal Court was that a lot must be at least 2 acres, that the one or two lots created (depending the size of a farm) can only be conveyed from a parent to a child or a grandparent to a grandchild, and the parent farm tract and any created lots cannot be sold for 10 years.

The commission also tabled action on Article I of the zoning ordinance, which included revised definitions for agricultural use and deleted tourist destination as principal use. Those amendments were previously presented to the commission, Hunter said.

Helping library patrons uncover their family histories, stories

By **BOB VLACH**
WOODFORD SUN STAFF

Cheri Daniels, the history librarian at the Woodford County Library, grew up in Cincinnati, but says she has family roots—on her mother’s side—in Northern Kentucky. That’s where she fell in love with Kentucky.

She remembers spending “weeks at a time” in Pendle-

ton County and going to cemeteries with her mother and great-grandmother. Both had an interest in family heritage, so drives to cemeteries and out-of-the-way places like a two-story log cabin built by her third great-grandfather were a frequent endeavor during the summer.

“I loved all of this,” Daniels says, “because to me that was adventure. I’m traipsing through these old cemeteries, and my great-grandmother saying, ‘Oh, that’s your second great-grandmother or that’s ...’”

Daniels was only 9 when her great-grandmother died, yet she vividly remembers looking at family photos — “one thing I’ve always been attracted to” — with her.

By the time she was 16, photos and the documents backing up the stories that she had been told about her family “just set me off,” she says of her path to a career in libraries and delving into her family’s genealogy.

Family history gave her context and helped her understand a broader, shared past. And most importantly, gave her a sense of place.

“I would encourage anybody that’s even thinking about it, get started (researching your family’s history),



CHERIDANIELS encourages anyone to begin researching their family genealogy. That research begins with discovering who you and your parents are, according to Woodford County Library’s history librarian. She’s pictured with a book published in 1633 that former library assistant Nolan Greene found. (Photo by Bob Vlach)



ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS, including deeds dating back to the 1700s, from the Woodford County Historical Society, are now available to Woodford County Library patrons in the new History Room. (Photo by Bob Vlach)

just get started,” says Daniels. She wrote down stories told to her by both of her grandfathers, and says it’s important to not only preserve history, but to share the past with other people, your family.

“Start with your birth certificate, your school records,” she says. “... Gather those documents, see what information’s in those documents,” which will provide “all these different little nug-

gets and pieces” of information about who you and your parents are.

Before becoming the history librarian in February, Daniels says she already knew about the Woodford County Historical Society’s “really robust collection.” What she did not realize was that the collection was being moved to a new space at the

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Monday, May 19, Midway City Council at 5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, May 20, Versailles City Council at 5:30 p.m.