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Benedictine Rezoning Proposal Moves Forward

(KAIR) -- A controversial rezoning effort for Benedictine College, to move their baseball and softball complexes and expand their campus, moves forward.

This came after nearly 90 minutes of debate Wednesday evening in the full Atchison Planning Commission room at Atchison City Hall.

Most of the attendees expressed opposition, which included a citizens group consisting mostly of property owners neighboring the campus.

Benedictine President Steve Minnis gave a presentation outlining their intentions to move the ball fields north of Larry Wilcox Stadium and expand Westerman Hall, build a new rec center and potentially a new fine arts center.

Minnis, who was the only person to speak publically in support of the measure, further addressed concerns of the group in his presentation.

(Play Audio)

Minnis also noted that they would plan to put no parking signs up along P and 1st Streets.

The citizens group was represented by Leawood attorney Kelly Warren.

She questioned the lack of information provided so far by Benedictine, such as no traffic studies and the anticipated size of the baseball stadium.

(Audio Continues)

Warren also said the first time those affected received notices were 25 days prior and that Benedictine didn't produce any landscaping plans.

Warren also presented evidence of several other college baseball fields being located at least a mile away.

She produced rules of NAIA practice regulations, stating that the college could use field up to 24 weeks out of the year.

Then, ten others spoke citing various concerns, ranging from the impact of a field in their backyards, to the safety of their childcare facility nearby with new foot and vehicle traffic.

John Ernst had projects change next to his nearby property in the past.

He's concerned that there will be a communication barrier if the zoning goes through like there was with the projects near him.

Pastor Michael Strickland lives near the potential rezoning and is now concerned that the uniqueness of his neighborhood would disappear.

(Audio Continues)

The measure ended up being recommended to the City Commission six to zero with an amendment offered by Chairman Derek Franklin that Benedictine must come back to a future Planning Commission with more specific details on their plan.

The rezoning proposal was originally scheduled for Monday's Atchison City Commissioner agenda, however, it has now been rescheduled for June 3rd meeting.

It will be only at the will of the Commission that any citizens can speak further on the proposal.

Cathy Coronado reacts to the next step in the zoning process.

(Audio Continues)

The June 3rd meeting will begin at 4:30 at City Hall.

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