

Kannapolis' concerns may slow land plan

Cabarrus commissioners can negotiate with city, may delay implementation

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CABARRUS - The City of Kannapolis' concerns over a portion of Cabarrus County's land-use plan for 39,200 acres of unincorporated land in the eastern part of the county may slow the county's approval process, originally slated for August.

Kannapolis City Manager Mike Legg said the concerns are focused on Interstate 85's Exit 63 interchange and the area to its south - about 15 percent of the eastern unincorporated area.

Right now, most of that area is zoned for open space and agricultural uses, allowing developers to build only one house for every two or three acres.

The area is part of Kannapolis' utilities extension area, as agreed upon with Concord.

"We think that interchange will be dramatically different over the next several years," said Legg, noting the development the North Carolina Research Campus and a planned medical center would bring to the city corridor. "And I think the residential densities should be comparable to the interchange."

The land plan is based on two months of well-attended community input sessions, at which many residents expressed their hopes to preserve that area of the county as open space.

Kannapolis met with county staff Thursday, the same day the Cabarrus Planning and Zoning Commission was to recommend the entire land-use plan to the County Commission for an August vote.

The planning commission agreed Thursday to recommend the land plan to the Cabarrus Board of County Commissioners with an allowance for officials to negotiate with Kannapolis on the plan.

Those negotiations may push back the Aug. 18 consideration planned by commissioners, officials said.

County commissioners also planned to hold a public meeting for the down-zoned areas in the plan on Aug. 21.

"Between now and that meeting, if they can get something (those public hearings can occur)," said Susie Morris, planning manager for the county.

Legg said he will take the plan to Kannapolis City Council for input.

He said his concerns also come with the plan's life span of 20 years, as the changes and growth Kannapolis may see in regard to the research campus are unknown.

However, because the plan was the work of many community meetings, Morris questioned whether or not more public input sessions would be scheduled if changes are made for Kannapolis.

In June, Concord and the county ended an eight-month pause on annexations and utility extensions in the area through an interlocal agreement. The agreement states that Concord will not extend utilities to developers or allow utility tap-ons without the consent of the county.

Kannapolis and Harrisburg are expected to enter similar agreements with county.

If an agreement cannot be reached, Legg said the area could be removed from the county's Central Planning Area, and it would continue on with its current zoning.

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