



Businessmen told mall questions 7 months late

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HIGHLAND - Nearly 30 business owners attending Wednesday night's Plan Commission meeting for information on a proposed shopping center found they were in the wrong place.

They came in response to a published notice that a special Town Council meeting was planned on the proposed Boulevard Shopping Center at Indianapolis Boulevard and Main Street.

The business owners were from the Downtown Business District on Highway Avenue and from the industrial park south of 45th Street and east of Indianapolis Boulevard.

The Plan Commission's only action on the project was to endorse a tax increment financing district resolution that was passed May 26 by the Redevelopment Commission.

The resolution still must go before a public hearing by the Town Council. No date has been set

Plan Commission member John Dahlkamp was upset with the barrage of questions from the business owners trying to catch up on seven months of progress on the proposed shopping center and the taxing district, which would spur development south of 45th Street.

"My God, where have they been for the last seven months?" Dahlkamp said after nearly an hour of discussion. "Where have you been? We expected you to be here every meeting. You are bombarding us with questions we answered months ago."

The taxing district description calls for 10 projects divided into three

phases. The total estimate for all projects is \$2.7 million.

The improvements would bring sanitary sewers to the area for commercial and residential development and would improve Indianapolis Boulevard, Main Street, Kennedy Avenue and their intersections.

Although this work would be necessary for the Boulevard Shopping Center to be built, other developments in the area also would be possible as a result.

One other proposal petitioned to the Plan Commission is a residential development by developer George Watson.

Industrial park business owners are concerned because the shopping center proposal calls for a retention basin that will pump water into Spring Street Ditch. The ditch is located along the industrial park, and when it overflows, it flows onto Express Drive, where businesses are located.

"There was 16 inches of water on Express Drive last week," said Charlie Wilson, owner of Highland Hydraulics. "The town pumped it out, but it took three days. They say there's going to be a retention pond, but will it hold it?" Wilson said he lost \$12,000 in business because customers could not enter his firm. He said he had to let one employee go as a result of his financial loss.

Gary Zandstra of Zandstra Fruit Co., 9925 Express Drive, said he thinks the taxing district agenda puts the cart before the horse because the proposed improvements on Spring Ditch come at the tail end of the three-phase project. "A week ago that area was a pond," Zandstra said. "You're still putting them in a swamp. If that property is developed without improving the ditch first, you'll create another problem."

Downtown business owners, who are not part of the proposed taxing district, said they wanted more information about it and what it will do for the town.