

DNJ.com, Adequate public notice question (9.14.12)

MURFREESBORO — Rutherford County officials this week discussed whether their public notice was good enough to inform people about neighborhood meetings, as well as adjustments to a Buddhist Temple.

The Rutherford County Regional Planning Commission on Monday heard complaints from two Springhouse subdivision residents that they didn't get invited to a neighborhood meeting held at a Bob Parks Realty office about development changes that will allow smaller homes to be built nearby in the proposed Nature Walk subdivision.

"I myself and a neighbor were not notified," said Jim Tate, who joined fellow Springhouse resident Clyde Alexander to speak up during a public hearing before the planners. "I didn't know about this until 10 minutes ago. I was not notified by the planning commission."

Both neighbors are worried about the developers' plans to build 1,600-foot homes.

"These newhouses you are proposing are half the size (of the ones in Springhouse)," said Tate, who is worried about the value of his home when smaller and less expensive houses are built nearby.

In response to the neighbors' concerns and questions, Planning Commissioner Will Jordan persuaded fellow planners to defer a vote until the developers can meet with the neighbors and report back when the planning commissioners meet at 6 p.m. Oct. 8 in the second-floor courtroom of the County Courthouse.

When it comes to public hearings, the planning commission sends out letters to residents who reside within

feet of the property up for rezoning, Assistant Planning Director Elizabeth Emslie said.

Project representative John Harney, who works for the Parks Group, said the developers followed the 500-foot rule in inviting residents to the neighborhood meeting.

In hopes of persuading the neighbors to accept the new plans, Harney said Nature Walk will set aside 35 percent of its 74.95 acres as open space that he promised will be attractive and well-maintained by an association.

"We've got sidewalks throughout Nature Walk," Harney said.

In addition to the Nature Walk discussion, Commissioner Jordan also questioned whether the public notice was sufficient for an adjusted Buddhist Temple plan for 4880 Barfield Crescent Road that was added to the agenda late.

“I want to make sure we don’t do anything improper,” said Jordan, noting that the planning commissioners face a lawsuit accusing them of failing to provide proper public notice before approving the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro’s plans for its new mosque on Veals Road off Bradyville Pike.

Emslie said the planning officials had already approved the initial plans for this Buddhist Temple on Barfield Crescent Road, and this was only an adjustment.

The Buddhist congregation had planned to use a 4,150-square-foot structure but decided instead to renovate a 2,176-square-foot barn to serve as the place for medication, said project engineer Jamie Reed of SEC.

“They don’t believe in having bathrooms in part of the building,” said Reed, noting that the congregation instead will have a 300-square-foot building for bathrooms.

#### Deputy mayor decision

The Rutherford County Commission approved a plan Thursday to allow Mayor Ernest Burgess to hire a deputy to the mayor. The vote was 18-1 with only Commissioner Matthew Young voting no. Commissioners Jack Black and Steve Sandlin were not present when the vote took place.

Prior to agreeing to let the mayor make this hire, the majority rejected an amendment that would give the commission the power to confirm the appointment of the deputy mayor. Only five supported giving the final hiring authority to the commission: Robert Peay Jr., who called for the amendment, Young, who seconded the motion, Doug Shafer, Carol Cook and Joe Frank Jernigan.