

# Partnership sees vote as forward movement

Broker: City now "open and willing to do business."

By Kary Booher

KBOOHER@NEWS-LEADER.COM

Moments after the City Council voted in favor of rezoning to commercial a 500-acre area north of the U.S. 60-65 interchange, the pointperson for the proposal had a bounce in his step as he left City Hall.

"It sends a statement to the development community outside the area that Springfield is open and willing to do business with large developers," said Robert B. Murray III, a local real estate broker representing the 60/65 Partnership.

"In the past, Springfield has had a track record of being a challenging place to do business."

The City Council spent more than an hour debating the proposal — and annexing 250 acres of the area — before approving both on 7-2 votes.

Several council members indicated their votes came down to the wire as they listened to supporters and opponents of the 60/65 Partnership as late as 5 p.m. Monday — or one hour before the council began its session.

Three council members were on the fence about both proposals entering the weekend. They included Scott Bailes, John Rush and Doug Burlison.

Rush, who was on vacation most of last week, said he spent the weekend reading e-mails and reviewing the proposal.

He said he wavered

every day — particularly with the potential for increased traffic in and around Sequiota Elementary — and voted in favor because the developer is required to go before council with any specific proposals.

"It looks to me like my vote now has more weight than I want it to have," Rush said. "It is a gamble. But is it a gamble we're willing to risk. There is only one way to find out."

Rush said e-mail correspondence with a fellow council member stated, "We have to be prepared when the economy changes."

"I think seriously this would be a way. Shovel-ready as they say. But frankly it's not that easy," Rush said.

"Somebody's house is going to go. It's a traffic issue. Safety of children is an issue."

Rush drove through the Colony Cover mobile home park.

"That is a cool place. That is not a transient place at all," he said.

"They plant flowers. It's their home. If I were there, I would be very concerned about this issue and what the city is going to do with my property."

He did have questions about the traffic feasibility study.

"This is not going to be cheap," he said.

Bailes' main issue was the fact that the council has no say in an east-west arterial road in county territory.

Homeowner associations in Forrest Ridge and Woodbridge subdivisions had expressed concerns,

and Bailes implored Greene County officials to heed those concerns — and for the developer to pay infrastructure costs.

"I've spent more time on this in the last month than working," Bailes said.

"I know there will not be a larger scale development in my lifetime. And although the timing seems very odd to me, if a developer would ever come to the table in this project, we don't know."

Bailes said he has friends in Forrest Ridge and Woodbridge neighborhoods.

"If we funnel traffic through either place, I'll hear about it long after my term expires."

Burlison sided with property owners.

"To close the door on the potential of this proposal tonight would actually be violating the property rights of the sellers," Burlison said. "They have a right to seek enrichment through the use of their property."

All this came after council member Cindy Rushefsky called the annexation proposal "very foolish and irresponsible" because it stretches police and fire protection services.

Her concerns centered on traffic issues in and around Mentor Avenue and Lone Pine Avenue.

"In this case, there are a great many questions. But there are no convincing answers," she said.

"We're being told to hurry up and approve the zoning now before even one developer has come forward with a plan, or even a real interest in this property."