

Bedford rezones five of six parcels at Sterns-Lewis

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BEDFORD TOWNSHIP — Officials stressed to residents that the rezoning vote Tuesday night had nothing to do with Walmart or a “big box” store coming into the township.

The Bedford Township Board of Trustees approved the rezoning of five of six parcels of land on Lewis Ave. and Sterns Rd. in Temperance at

its regular meeting.

Walt Wilburn, township supervisor, said the vote was about one thing only.

“This isn’t about Walmart,” Mr. Wilburn said. “This is about whether or not to approve a request to rezone land.”

Dennis Jenkins, the township’s planning coordinator, said the way the property was originally zoned, an approximately 200,000-square-foot store could be built on the

site. Building a store larger would be difficult now unless the dealership that sits on the property is torn down.

Trustees voted on more than 28 acres of land that is housed inside a larger 41-acre parcel of land that belongs to Jon Whitman, the owner of Whitman Ford Co.

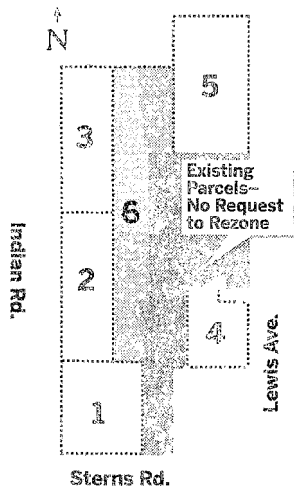
Two existing parcels of land were not up for rezoning, which include a piece that is a little more than 5 acres currently rezoned C-2

commercial and another 8.5 acres that is zoned C-3 commercial, which contains the dealership.

Mr. Whitman’s attorney, Thomas Hansen of Ann Arbor, spoke for him during the meeting.

“This property has had a long history,” Mr. Hansen said. “Sterns and Lewis has long been deemed a commercial intersection of the town-

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— Evening News map by CRYSTI ESPER

ship.”

Mr. Hansen said all of the C-3 commercial property, the heaviest commercial property, will be along Lewis Ave.

“We have provided adequate transition,” Mr. Hansen said. “Every expert who has looked at this property over the last five or six years, they said commercial, transition, Indian Acres. This is appropriate for this site.”

Treasurer Sherri Meyer, who voted no on all of the parcels of land, said she has a number of concerns about the property.

“I believe people’s homes are the largest single investment they will make,” she said. “I’m concerned no impact study has been done and what effect it will have on our small businesses.”

Trustee Larry O’Dell voted yes on five of the parcels because of the township’s master plan.

“We are bound to use that as a guide through this,” Mr. O’Dell said. “All of the things that are on here, except one, are part of the master plan.”

The board voted to approve parcels one through five by a vote of 5 to 2, with Trustee Jim Goebel also voting no.

The board denied an 8.28-acre parcel located in the middle of the rezoning. The proposal was to change the piece of land from R-2A residential to C-2 commercial.

More than 130 people attended the meeting Tuesday night. Several residents spoke on the rezoning.

Dennis Rabb, a Temperance resident, spoke on the economic implications for the community.

“It seems a number of people think commercial growth translates to an economic boom,” Mr. Rabb said. “The

sales tax from a store this size (a large big box store) would benefit the State of Michigan, but very little would benefit this township.”

Lambertville resident Robert Alexander is in favor of the rezoning. He lives near the Secor/Sterns Rd. intersection.

“It’s busy, but it’s a tremendous convenience,” Mr. Alexander said. “We like it. There are places for people to shop. I don’t want to have to travel to Toledo to shop.”

The Bedford Township trustees approved a parcel that is a little more than 4 acres of land that backs up to the Indian Acres subdivision to be changed to elderly residential housing. Another parcel that is a little more than 4 acres was approved to be rezoned to multiple-family residential.

An additional 4 acres will change from residential and commercial property to professional and business offices. That parcel of land is on Sterns Rd. and also backs up to the subdivision.

The highest level of commercial property was approved, including a 3.27-acre parcel and a 3.59-acre parcel that changed from C-2 commercial to C-3 commercial.

The rezoning of the property has been in the headlines for years beginning with speculations of a Walmart moving onto the property and a court battle. In February, 2007, Mr. Whitman lost in Monroe County Circuit Court against Bedford Township.

The property next to Indian Rd. was mistakenly labeled C-2 commercial property; however, there had not been a rezoning hearing for that change from residential property to commercial.