

June 19, 2003

Kalamazoo Gazette

By Ed Finnerty

Rezoning for dental office near preserve is disputed

BY ED FINNERTY
KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Barely more than an acre of land that has been the subject of several hours of public hearings is headed for yet more discussion.

The Kalamazoo City Commission, on the suggestion of city administrators, returned a proposed rezoning of 1.2 acres of property near the Kleinstuck Nature Preserve to the city Planning Commission on Monday.

Kalamazoo dentist Mark Allen has asked the city to rezone the property on Hudson Drive, just southeast of the Maple Street YMCA, from single-family residential to an office designation that would allow him to move his practice there.

Neighbors have gathered hundreds of petition signatures opposing the change, which they say would damage property values

and ruin a wooded, pristine piece of property adjacent to the 50-acre Kleinstuck Preserve.

The Planning Commission heard from dozens of people, most opposed to the rezoning, during public hearings in April and May before voting 8-1 to recommend that the City Commission reject the change. The city administration, however, supports the rezoning and argues that it is consistent with the city's Future Land-Use Map that shows the property becoming office land.

On Monday, the commission opened a public hearing during which the two dozen people who spoke were split between opponents of the rezoning and supporters of Allen and his project. The commission then voted 6-1 to follow a recommendation by City Manager Pat DiGiovanni to return the issue to the Planning Commis-

sion for more discussion with opponents and supporters of the rezoning.

Commissioners said they want more exploration of ways to buffer nearby residents from effects of office development on the site. Commissioner Don Cooney, who said he opposes the rezoning, voted against drawing the issue out further by referring it back to the Planning Commission.

"We really would like to see a win-win, if possible," Mayor Robert Jones said.

Commissioners asked for a recommendation from the Planning Commission that would be considered July 21, when the public hearing before the City Commission is scheduled to resume.

Ed Finnerty can be reached at 388-8551 or efinnerty@kalamazoo gazette.com.

© 1970-2004 KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

All rights reserved.

Used with permission of KALAMAZOO GAZETTE