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Metro / NE Iowa

Zoning board rejects proposed housing development

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The Black Hawk County Planning and Zoning Board gave thumbs down Tuesday to a proposed 33-lot residential housing development two miles north of Cedar Falls.

After neighbors opposed to the development brought up its proximity to a major highway, location under an airport flight path and constant problems with flooding, zoning board members were wondering why anyone would want to live there in the first place.

Property owner Paul Sassaman was asking to rezone 121 acres of land — at the southwest corner of Bennington and Big Woods roads — from agricultural to residential use.

The property, which sits just west of new Highway 218, would be developed into residential lots by Christopher Conrad and James Flaughter. Engineer Paul Helland, representing the developers, said the homes would be in the \$80,000 to \$150,000 price range.

"I don't know how you propose to

put homes in there," said Gloria Dayton, one of a dozen opponents at a public hearing. "When you dig down four or five feet, you hit water."

"That whole area there the summer before, the culvert washed out of the road," she added. "It was just like a river meandering through there."

County Zoning Administrator Bob Donels said the property is "just a hop, skip and a jump" from the new highway.

Portions of the land, which is in the flood plain, were still under water last week. The Soil Conservation Service has determined the soil is not suitable to support drain fields for the septic tanks.

"It is a waterway there," said resident Barb Simons. "The water just rushes through there."

Other residents said a housing development in the area could be a future drain on taxpayers if the federal government is required to come in and relocate residents after a flood. A similar situation is occurring about two miles to the south on Joanne Street in Cedar Falls.

Other residents said they were

opposed to residential development in the rural areas of the county, which could ruin the quality of life they enjoy and lead to problems when new neighbors complain about the less pleasant aspects of rural living.

"What's going to happen when a cow gets out and goes through their lawns?" asked Del Leavitt.

Ray Dickman said he was worried about the installation of new wells to serve the homes.

"What's going to happen when they put their wells down and find a little doo doo in their water?" he asked. "Who's going to get sued?"

Board members voted 4-0 to recommend denial of the zoning request when it goes to the Board of Supervisors for final approval, probably within a month. Board member Maxine Veatch cited water and septic problems, the intensity of housing, a potential public health risk and quality of the soil as reasons for her decision.

In other business, a zoning request from Soper Enterprises was withdrawn after opposition to the proposal organized.

The pallet construction company



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wanted to rezone 72 acres at the southwest corner of Wagner and Dunkerton roads to relocate from its current cramped quarters on Airline Highway in Waterloo.

Advocates for residents at Country View, the county nursing and mental health facility, were opposed to the request.