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# OPINIONS

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## LETTER BOX

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## OUR VIEW

# It would be nice if words accompanied the actions

**W**henever a public meeting is convened, one would rightfully expect the officials in charge to listen to the concerns of those attending.

On that front, we have no problem with members of the city-county plan commission. The group met last week and listened to a couple of hours of testimony, much of it against rezoning land for two apartment projects near the Ball State University campus proposed by out-of-state developers. More than 70 residents of the Layne Crest neighborhood opposed a \$15 million project for a 216-unit, 584-bed apartment complex bordering McGalliard Road between Scheumann Stadium and Oakwood Avenue that would be marketed to Ball State students.

The other project was a 36-unit complex in the 300 block of North Dill Street to be marketed to low-income service employees of Ball State and IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital.

The plan commission is an advisory body, so the real decision rests with the Muncie City Council, which will take up the rezoning issue at a future meeting.

We have issues with two facets of the plan commission meeting.

First, we find it puzzling that plan commission members, according to The Star Press account of the meeting, offered virtually no discussion following the public comments. There were no deliberations on the pros or cons of the project.

Perhaps the public comments were so one-sided against the projects that there was no need for commission members to discuss the proposals. Or, perhaps the members of the plan commission had made up their minds before the meeting began.

If so, that makes a public meeting a sham. Legally, plan commission members don't have to reveal the reasons for their individual votes, but the public's interest is best served if they do, or at least discuss

the issue before voting at a public meeting.

The next day, some members still dodged a reporter's questions about the vote. That isn't serving the public's interest.

Second, members voting against the project had valid reasons (among the few who talked to a Star Press reporter) for choosing to do so (too dense, traffic concerns, location, etc.). However, we wonder whether it also sends an unintended message to potential developers that Muncie is not welcoming to out-of-state ventures. We hope that is not the case.

Muncie needs good housing stock at affordable prices, not only for people who need a home, but because the city needs the tax revenue development brings.

On the surface, the plan commission's vote in favor of the public sentiments expressed against the projects appears to be the popular decision. Whether that's the correct one remains to be seen. Next up, the city council.

