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Apartment rezoning request, bonuses introduced

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Written by KEITH ROYSDON

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MUNCIE -- Two potentially controversial ordinances received first readings from the Muncie City Council on Monday evening, but only one prompted much debate.

A request from Mayor Sharon McShurley for 2012 budget appropriations -- including \$1,000 bonuses for city employees -- was introduced with little comment.

But the introduction of an ordinance to rezone more than 10 acres of land along McGalliard Road provoked more than an hour of comment from representatives of the would-be developer as well as neighbors opposed to the plan.

Both ordinances could see final action in the council's Dec. 5 meeting.

Muncie attorney Scott Shockley represented North Carolina-based Campus Crest, a developer that wants to build 216 apartment units aimed at Ball State University students in 10 four-story buildings on the land, which was platted near McGalliard and Oakwood Avenue in 1960 but never developed.

Amy Rider and other residents of the Layne Crest neighborhood raised issues that included increased traffic and drainage problems.

Opponents also noted that the Metropolitan Plan Commission had already given the development an unfavorable recommendation.

Shockley said the \$15 million project would spark economic development and create 80 jobs during construction and a few permanent jobs without adversely affecting the neighborhood.

The attorney also noted that more than half the residents of the

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neighborhood had entered into agreements -- and been paid \$2,000 each -- in 2006 not to oppose development of the land.

But Rider noted that the agreement did not cover changing the zoning to multi-family residential.

Rider said residents knew the land would be developed but did not believe the apartment complex was the best use.

She also raised objections to the possibility that increased traffic and poor visibility might lead to car-pedestrian accidents.

"I don't think one person needs to be struck by a car," Rider said. "Maybe that's just my humanity."

Several residents of the neighborhood spoke against the project, which council members said they would take under advisement until their December meeting.

McShurley -- who announced the bonuses shortly before losing her re-election bid to Democratic Party mayoral candidate Dennis Tyler -- spoke only briefly during the council meeting. City Controller Mary Ann Kratochvil presented the request for budget appropriations, including the bonuses.

Kratochvil emphasized several times that the city had enough funds to pay for the requests but needed council's appropriation.

City council President Sam Marshall called the financial figuring behind the request "a little mystery."

Contact business editor Keith Roysdon at 213-5828. Find him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/keithroysdon.

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