

Proposal to annex hops another hurdle

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West Chicago, IL -

A controversial proposal to annex more than 200 acres into the city of West Chicago has passed two hurdles.

The Plan Commission unanimously approved the measure last Wednesday amid outcry from dozens of residents who said a nearby wetlands could be destroyed if the property is developed. Then on Monday, the Development Committee unanimously voted to send the proposal to the City Council for final approval.

More than 100 people attended the Plan Commission meeting, many of them against the proposal. Opponents shouted “this is unbelievable” and “good luck getting re-elected” to commission members after their vote.

The land is between Route 59 and Klein Road, just north of St. Andrews Golf and Country Club, which owns the land. It is nestled among subdivisions and sits adjacent to a portion of the Forest Preserve of DuPage County, West Branch known as Klein fen, a section of wetlands fed in part by the 200 acres up for annexation.

In March, just after St. Andrews asked the city annex and zone the land, the Forest Preserve approached St. Andrews about buying the property to protect the nearby fen.

A group of nearby residents, known as Friends of Klein Fen, banded together to protest St. Andrews’ request to annex the property and zone it as R-3, which requires a minimum lot size of 9,000 square feet. All land annexed into the city is automatically given ER-1 status which requires 40,000 square-foot lots.

St. Andrews has assured residents that they have no plans to sell or develop the land and have turned down more than a dozen offers. Still, residents cautioned city officials from annexing and zoning the land before they know what could be developed there.

“Remember the mockery of ad hocery,” Friends of Klein Fen attorney Christopher Stull said, quoting a mentor. “They city has enjoyed success. But you have enjoyed that for one reason: you knew where you were going.”

Other residents voiced support for the annexation, many of whom cited a need for development to lower West Chicago’s high taxes.

“I have seen in the past where everyone seems to get our land and we seem to have little land left to develop,” said Eldra Rakow, a 48-year resident. “I really think this is an opportunity for West Chicago to make things better.”

On Wednesday, St. Andrews Club President Jerry Hinckley told the commission that negotiations with the Forest Preserve had come to a standstill.

Up Next

What: The City Council will hold a public hearing on the annexation and zoning of 203 acres owned by St. Andrews Golf and Country Club.

When: 7 p.m. Oct. 1.

Where: City Hall, 475 Main St.

“We made a final offer to them and they rejected it,” Hinckley said.

Forest Preserve officials have assessed the land at about \$100,000 per acre, or \$20 million for all 200 acres. St. Andrews representatives have not released their own assessment of the land’s value.

In response to some of the residents’ concerns over possible development, Mayor Michael Kwasman urged the Development Committee to amend the proposal to include language that would require any future developments to blend into the surrounding area and to come in as a Planned Unit Development. St. Andrews officials agreed to the language and the committee passed the amendment without discussion.

A public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for the City Council’s Monday, Oct. 1, meeting, after which the council is expected to take action.

