

WAL-MART CONCERNS

Bedford ordinances limit development

TEMPERANCE — Members of the Bedford Township board last night overwhelmingly approved a package of ordinances that should dramatically impact the way the township looks for the next several decades and might limit the development of "big box" stores.

The ordinances address issues of architecture, landscaping, and lighting, and lay out specific guidelines for future development in Toledo's biggest suburb. A group made up of township officials, developers, engineers, and residents developed all three ordinances over a 14-month period.

At their core, the ordinances seek to limit future commercial development in the township to small neighborhood retailers that meet some of the needs of township residents, but not necessarily draw customers from surrounding areas. "We recognize the city of Toledo as our commercial center. I don't believe anybody thinks we're going to develop our own Franklin Park Mall up here in Temperance," explained Trustee Joyce Hagen, who helped spearhead creation of the ordinances.

Among the most significant changes that will occur as a result of the ordinances is a limitation on development in the township's C-2 commercial zoning classification that would restrict new stores to no larger than 70,000 square feet, just slightly larger than the new Kroger store that opened last year in Lambertville.

Such a limitation might impact development of a potential Wal-Mart store near Lewis Avenue and West Sterns Road. Owners of a 30-acre vacant parcel near that intersection told neighbors earlier this year that they planned to build a Wal-Mart near that site, raising the ire of some nearby residents.

Township board members raised questions about several of

the ordinances' specific requirements, including whether passage of the ordinances would make several existing businesses and properties nonconforming with their current zoning, meaning they could not be rebuilt in their present form if they were destroyed.

"I just have concerns for those businesses, if something catastrophic would happen," township Treasurer Sherri Meyer said.

"Everybody is concerned with how Bedford looks, how we grow, and what we are. But being on the Bedford Business Association, I know that there is concern within the business community that we don't take their flexibility away to practice good business," Trustee Arnold Jennings said.

In other action last night, the board gave its approval to giving liquor licenses to a pair of existing township businesses and one in the planning stages.

Panda Gardens, a restaurant that opened several months ago in Lambertville, Memories Banquet Hall on Lewis Avenue, and a new restaurant in the Temperance area called M.T. Loonies will now have to appear before the Michigan Liquor Control Commission to receive final approval to sell liquor on the premises.

The township received three new liquor licenses under state law after the 2000 census, but opted not to hold one in reserve, even though it will be 10 years before the township could receive any more from the state.

The board also set a hearing for 6 p.m. Sept. 3 to listen to the case of suspended Lambertville District Fire Chief Dennis Cox. Mr. Cox was suspended from the department in late June for what Chief John Bofia called "operational" performance issues. Two previous hearings have been postponed.