

Published: 6/8/2011

Whitman rezoning is denied Board votes 6-1 against change

BLADE STAFF

TEMPERANCE -- After listening to public opposition, the Bedford Township Board Tuesday night denied Jon Whitman's 19th request to rezone property he owns at 7555 Lewis Ave.

Mr. Whitman wanted to rezone approximately 20 acres -- formerly his family's Ford dealership -- from C-2 to C-3, which would allow a more intense commercial use. The board vote came after a public hearing during which many township residents spoke out against the zoning change, saying they feared the property would become the site for a big box store such as Walmart.

The board vote was 6-1, with trustees Gail Hauser-Hurley, James Goebel, and Larry O'Dell voting to deny the change. Joining them were Supervisor Walt Wilburn, Clerk Bob Schockman, and Treasurer Sherri Meyer. Trustee Paul Francis cast the only vote in favor of the request.

The township board is the final authority on the request, and its action puts to an end, at least for the time being, the issue of rezoning the property at the northwest corner of Lewis and Sterns Road. The issue has been simmering for years in the township with Mr. Whitman's multiple requests for a change of zoning for his property. Both the Monroe County and Bedford Township planning commissions had recommended against granting this request.

Steven Lennex, Mr. Whitman's real estate broker, said he did not know what his client's next move would be. Before the vote, he urged the board to grant the request, saying the difference between the C-2 and C-3 designations was marginal. He described his client's wish as "a benign request," and said the zoning change, if granted, would not harm public safety or property values.