

Freedom Drive rezoning, closure approved

By GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Following a lengthy discussion, Clemson City Council on Tuesday night unanimously approved both the rezoning and a partial road closure for Freedom Drive, paving the way for a shopping center development near the intersection of U.S. Highway 123 and S.C. Highway 93.

Council included a stipulation in its vote requiring the Hamilton Property Group to complete the road closure as agreed upon in a draft resolution — regardless of what takes place in the commercial project — with the addition of a performance bond to assure the work is completed. The stipulation was added to address concerns from Freedom Drive residents that the current state of the economy could bring the project to a halt after the work has already started.

Hamilton Property Group has been seeking to rezone property on Freedom Drive from multi-household residential to a community business and architectural overlay district. The group also sought to close a portion of Freedom Drive and create a cul-de-sac to eliminate the S.C. Highway 93 access route, with both requests designated as part of a targeted redevelopment area that would feature a shopping center.

Tom Hamilton, of the Hamilton Property Group, told council members in December that possible tenants include a grocery store, bookstore, a natural organic type of store and “a couple of sit down restaurants.” However, he could not disclose the identity of the store that could anchor the site.

Officials said Tuesday the group has sought to address concerns by affected residents through a minimum 4-foot wide curb and sidewalk from the

entrance to the shopping center off of Freedom Drive — about 250 feet from U.S. Highway 123 to the start of the cul-de-sac — in compliance with standards from the city of Clemson.

Lynn Sosebee, an engineer for the project, said the group has already met with the Clemson Board of Architectural Review. “That went well, and we made some revisions as suggested.”

Sosebee said the group has also appeared before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to address mitigating the impact of wetlands, and the Corps has assured construction won’t be held up.

Reaction among affected residents, despite the changes, remained mixed.

Paul Goldstein, a resident of Freedom Drive, commended Hamilton Group for “taking our interests to heart” by using landscaping to address aesthetic concerns and potentially negative impacts on neighborhood

property values.

“In the beginning, I didn’t know what was going on and when change occurs, it’s scary,” Goldstein said. “Now, after talking to the Hamilton Group, I’m 100 percent behind it and believe they have our best interests at heart.”

But Scott Chase said he is concerned the identity of businesses located at the shopping center remains unknown. “It still makes me a little shaky.”

Paul Schliefer, who owns one of the townhouses on Freedom Drive, told council members the entire process has frustrated him.

“If there’s going to be a project going in there, I don’t know of anyone I would feel more comfortable with, but that doesn’t ease my frustration with the process,” Schliefer said, adding he would have preferred a well-advertised meeting in a larger venue to discuss the project more fully.

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Clemson council OKs changes for shopping center

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CLEMSON — Clemson City Council has approved a hotly debated zoning change and partial road closure on Freedom Drive for a planned shopping center near the intersection of U.S. 123 and State 93.

The council approved both measures in a 5-0 vote after hearing from about half a dozen residents who spoke on both

sides of the issue, said City Administrator Rick Cotton.

Developer Tom Hamilton, of the Hamilton Property Group, has said potential tenants could include a grocery store and other retailers.

Resident Paul Schliefer has expressed concerns including the visual impact of the development, a small wetlands area on the property and the increase in traffic in the neighborhood.