Planning board OKs site for Daniel stadium

Members, however, voice concern over student, pedestrian safety

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Pickens County planning commissioners voted 4-2 last week to approve the School District of Pickens County's plan to construct the new Daniel High football stadium across State 133 from the high school's main campus.

However, the commissioners expressed concerns about everything from noise and lighting, to parking and pedestrian safety at Daniel's home football games.

"You're going to have the same thing that happens right now around the stadium — you're going to have not enough parking places, you're going to have people walking up (State) 133," said Commissioner Trey Whitehurst. "There's a potential for a real problem. ... It looks like an accident waiting to happen."

Donza Mattison, with McMillan Smith & Partners Architects, presented the latest plan for the stadium to the commission and addressed commissioners' and the public's questions about the 23-acre site that cost the district about $1.5 million.

Mattison said the district had originally planned to put spring sports facilities on the site across the street from the main campus but felt like that would put more students at risk.

"The issue with sending spring sports (on the new campus) is that meant a lot of students, every day after school, would have to be crossing 133," she said.

A football stadium would be "essentially used six or seven times a year (and), when you use a football stadium, you're going to have traffic control out there, so you will have people out there directing traffic. And after school, students do not have to go across the street to practice. All those practices will happen on the main campus."

Plans call for most of the parking to be on the main campus side of the road, but Mattison said the new configuration will create additional parking and that, overall, parking will more plentiful than it is now.

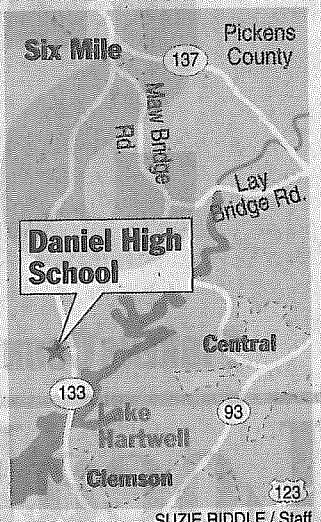
"It's going to be better," she said. "By the time you have all the additional parking that they don't have now – they're going to have practice fields to park on, turf areas to park on. They don't have any of those now ... so the situation's going to get better."

But commissioners expressed concern that much of the parking will be several hundred yards away from the stadium, and that pedestrians will line the shoulders of State 133 before and after the games.

Yet the commissioners also said that their hands are tied if the school district has met all of the county's development ordinances.

Commissioner Sheree Chapman, noting that the district had met county ordinances, made the motion to approve the district's plan.

After the vote, commission chairman DeWitt Stone Jr. voiced his concern about the plan. "I am completely unimpressed by the pedestrian safety part of this plan, and I'd like to see that in the minutes, because after the first horrible accident, I want to be on record," he said.



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