

## WARD 5 UPDATE

August 14, 2013

Approximately 30 people attended this citizen forum where I presented updates on a number of Ward 5 projects:

**Walmart:** Walmart held an open house at the Log Cabin on Monday August 12<sup>th</sup>. It was attended by well over 100 people, many from Ward 5. The site plans have not yet been submitted to the city, but general plans were shown at the open house. I discussed with Walmart representatives the following matters:

Traffic, potential for increased traffic on Autum & short cut potential on Lynch Dr. due to new light, siting of the building on the lot (will it be flat or will the hill remain? Hill will remain behind building as shown, truck noise for loading docks, lighting as it affects the neighborhoods, limiting hours of the store, requiring no over night parking.

Absent the failure of the company to meet permitting requirements as per local and state laws, the company has the right to build under the current zoning.

**Homestead Ave. intersection improvements:** Homestead and Lower Westfield Road: The ad for bids went out on August 10<sup>th</sup>, so the project will be part of the next schedule of state road improvements.

**HCC Road:** Holyoke Community College submitted a permit request last week. There is activity on Rt. 202 in preparation for the road construction.

**Holyoke Hotel:** The owner (Patel) is proposing to tear down ½ of the existing hotel and create four (4) pads for restaurants and build a 2<sup>nd</sup> hotel on the site so that there would be two distinct hotels. There has been one meeting held for the permitting process so far and it was continued. The owner is seeking to have three or four site options approved and then seek developers for the projects one the general site approval is gained. Then each project will come before planning for the unique requirements of the project. It is anticipated that they will be restaurants or retail, but could also be office. The projects do not require any zone changes for the property.

**Geriatric Authority / Gendara Lease:** Please see summary on my website. There is strong support and opposition to this program. The biggest concern is the combination of youth offenders with frail elders on the same campus. There was a public meeting at Finance Committee Tuesday evening with both sides fairly equally represented. It was stated that the Department of Public Health had approved this program combination. I have called for documentation of this approval before making a decision on the lease. When I asked if notice had been given to resident of the GA and the attendees of the Adult Day Health Care Program, no individual notice had been provided as of August 20<sup>th</sup>. The lease has been tabled in Finance Committee awaiting further information from the Geriatric Authority.

The meeting was then opened up for Q & A and comments:

Walmart: Almost every attendee spoke on one or more of the issues. Many were opposed to Walmart and raised a number of concerns including: traffic, truck noise, retaining pond becoming a swamp, layout of building (? Of apartments view of the building), air quality, safety concerns due to difficulty for fire and emergency vehicles to travel on Whiting Farms Rd, snow removal, and lighting. I let attendees know that I would post the date for the plan review once Walmart reps have submitted a plan to the city.

Some in attendance spoke in support of Walmart and the new jobs for residents.

Gendara lease: Attendees were in favor and opposed to this lease with the biggest concern being for the safety of the frail elders.

**NEW ISSUES:** One resident asked that a new decibel study for the Autumn Street neighborhood be conducted on Interstate 91. He asked that state and federal representatives be contacted to address this issue. It had been addressed when Rep. Kane was in office but no progress was made. Residents have long sought to have noise barriers constructed along the residential area of 1-91, but no funding has been allocated due to an old decibel study.

Submitted by,

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