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■ ONEIDA

Zoning changes a big draw

By DEANNA HORNYAK
Dispatch Staff Writer

ONEIDA — Most people do not regularly attend common council meetings. Tuesday, however, there was standing room only in the council chambers as residents came to voice their opinions on the changes made to the zoning map.

While the city left the date of the public hearing the same, Mayor Leo Matzke said at Tuesday night's council meeting that they have decided to push back the date of the vote by the council until the January 17 meeting. In addition, response from the public also prompted the city to send out letters to residents in areas, according to Matzke, that would feel the most impact from the changes.

One of these areas is the property that sits on the south entrance to the city along Route 46. The area that was previously zoned residential is set to be rezoned as neighborhood commercial. "Property that is set to be zoned neighborhood commercial will act as a transition area. It will look residential but can be used for commercial businesses like lawyers and doctors offices."

Another concern of many residents who spoke was a piece of property on Route 5 that is being used as a beauty salon. According to Matzke, the property still has two years left on its variance and, for now, the property will not be changed to commercial.

Don Skinner, a resident of Deerfield Drive, believes that the zoning is encroaching on the Oneida Heights housing tract that was started in 1960.

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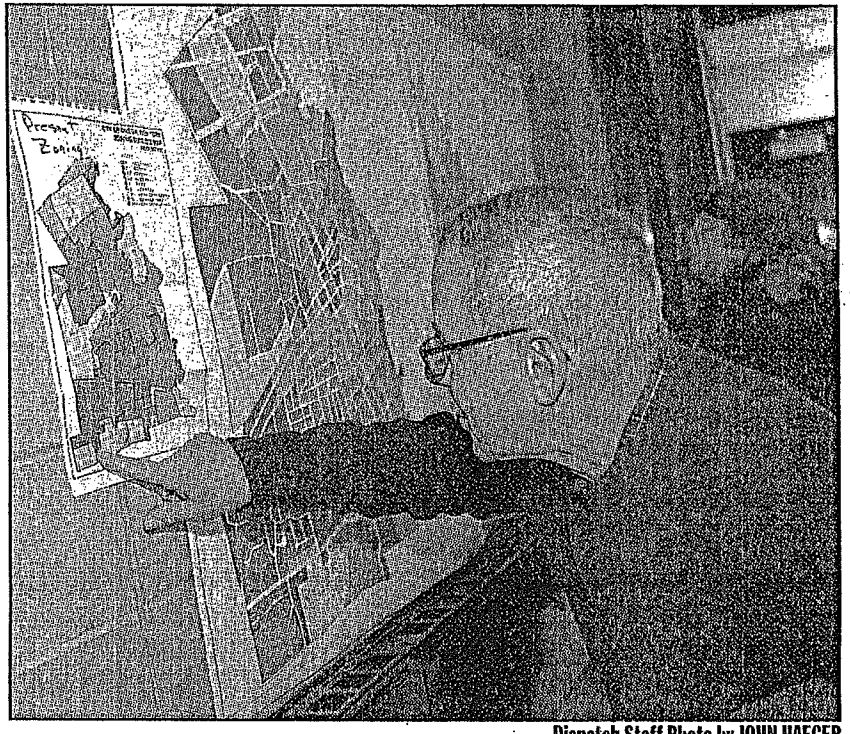

Dispatch Staff Photo by JOHN HAEGER

Gary Hood looks at the present Oneida zoning map for the inside district, smaller map, and the revised zoning map, prior to the start of the Oneida Common Council meeting on Tuesday.

■ MORRISVILLE

Grant helps fix Route 20

By DEANNA HORNYAK
Dispatch Staff Writer

MORRISVILLE — The speed limit through the Village of Morrisville along Route 20 is 35 mph. However, many suggest you drive slower if you don't want to leave behind a piece of your car.

The stretch of Route 20 that runs through Morrisville has been dug up many times to fix the water main that sits directly below the highway. This spring, the state Department of Transportation will spend $4 million to tear up approximately 1.5 miles of Route 20, starting at the state trooper barracks, to fix the condition of the highway.

To protect the water main lines from any more breaks while the work is going on, the Village of Morrisville has decided to move and replace the lines. The project is estimated by the DOT to cost about $350,000.

On Tuesday afternoon, Michelle Forward, mayor of the Village of Morrisville, publicly thanked Assemblyman William Magee for securing $250,000 to help pay for the project. "We just don't know how to thank him," she said.

Forward said that since she is a relatively new

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Big bicentennial

was in the U.S. Navy, where he took in special forces, he said.

DiStefano, however, was not impressed with his accomplishments.

"Mr. Baker, some people can believe you, but I don't," DiStefano told him.

He then turned to Baker's criminal record, reading for the court some of his previous offenses, which include issuing bad checks and attempted identity theft.

fines and surcharges. His sentencing is scheduled for Feb. 7.

• Michael Smith, 41, of Madison Street in Oneida, waived his right to an indictment and pleaded guilty to a felony charge of driving while intoxicated.

Smith admitted driving drunk in downtown Oneida on Dec. 25, 2004. He had previously been convicted of driving while intoxicated in 2001 in Oneida City Court.

possession of a weapon and second-degree menacing.

The trial lasted five days, and the jury returned its verdict around 9 p.m. Friday night. Jackson was accused of breaking into his girlfriend's family's summer home in Stockbridge in May. After finding her in bed with another man, he dragged her from the house and forced the other man to leave.

He is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 31.

Oneida

Continued from Page 1

"Property around the tract is continuously being rezoned," he said. "We brought a lawsuit against the city when the Nye Automotive Group's land was rezoned commercial."

He asked the council to protect the tax base and the residents living on residentially zoned property from encroaching commercially zoned land.

Joel Leibl, whose wife owns and operates the beauty salon on Route 5, said he doesn't see the negative impact on their neighbors. "We have had a variance for the last eight years to run our business. We have normal business hours, closing at five or six, and have very few cars parked out in front," he explained.

Leibl also said they have taken an older house, cleaned it up and maintained it over the past several years. "There is a buffer of two acres behind the property, another two acres on the side, and the property on the other side of the business is already zoned commercial," he said.

John Campanie also addressed the council on the proposed changes made to the zoning map.

"I think that more time is needed to study this issue," he said. Campanie, like many other people who spoke at the meeting, believes that the holiday season is the not the time to be discussing the matter. "The Master Plan and the new zoning ordinance should be put online with the changes outlined so we, the public, can understand them."

In particular, Campanie said the city should not be zoning agricultural land as residential land. "If we do this, the inner city homes will not get the attention they deserve," he said. Campanie believes that if the city keeps expanding the residential zones outside of the city, inner city homes will become run down or abandoned.

A couple of people also stood up to say they believe the city should consider sending out color maps and definition changes to all property taxpayers. Gail Pebbles suggested the city send out the information with the tax bills. She also suggested the city have another comment period. "We need to be cautious of protecting the residents who live here, but also keep the city growing," she said.

At the close of the public hearing Matzke said the council knew the changes to the zoning map were going to take a lot of thought. "We will take into consideration the comments made tonight and rethink some of the decisions we have made. We are all in this together and we just want the city to keep growing," he said.

Councilman Ted Hanifin also spoke to the public. "We have waited 18 or 19 years for this, so I don't see why we can't wait a little longer to get it right," he said.

As of now, City Hall only plans to send out letters to areas where they believe the residents will be most affected by the changes. "We are working on the letters to the people on Fitch Street right now," Matzke said," but otherwise, we have at least 25 properties that will receive letters."

Also at Tuesday night's council meeting, the council passed the 2006 budget. Before the council voted, Mike DeBottis, Madison County Supervisor for the City of Oneida, gave the council some constructive criticism. "I believe that the council should reconsider cutting the tax rate to at least 10 percent," he said. "When the county passed the legislation that allowed for a 1 percent sales tax increase, we hoped that extra money would then go to decrease property taxes." DeBottis then said that the city has developed a more liberal spending attitude.

Matzke defended his decision of a 2 percent property tax decrease, saying that he has taken a very conservative approach to the extra sales tax revenue. "We need to prepare for the next couple of years, not just look at next year," he said.

Army Carinci, who also advocated a bigger property tax decrease, was the only councilor to vote "nay" on the budget.

The next council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 20 at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

Fort Drum

Continued from Page 1

Cheney praised recent comments by Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut Democrat who was his vice presidential opponent in the 2000 election, suggesting that too hasty a U.S. withdrawal would erase nearly all the progress made by the United States in Iraq and the Middle East.

"He is entirely correct. On this, both Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree. The only way the terrorists can win is if we lose our nerve and abandon our mission," Cheney said.

urged support for Bush. "It's time for Democrats who distrust President Bush to acknowledge he'll be commander in chief for three more years," Lieberman said. "We undermine the president's credibility at our nation's peril."

Several other Democrats sent Bush a letter saying his speech Wednesday should include "a full and complete strategy for success with the political, economic and military benchmarks by which to measure the progress."

"Our concern is President Bush's policies are

polls show Bush's approval rating at the lowest of his presidency: 37 percent in a recent AP-Ipsos poll, with a majority of Americans now saying the war was a mistake.

One of the administration's harshest critics in recent weeks has been Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., a longtime hawk on military matters who now wants U.S. troops to pull out of Iraq.

Murtha suggested Tuesday that the administration was trying to justify the U.S. presence in Iraq by saying it was necessary to fight terrorism. Instead, Murtha said the problem was insurgents