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Council might adjust zoning plan

By DEANNA HORNYAK, Dispatch Staff Writer

Last Tuesday, however, the council chamber was filled with concerned residents, most of whom were questioning and criticizing the proposed changes to the zoning map and ordinance.

Mayor Leo Matzke said that overall he thought the council meeting was productive. "I thought that there were some good concerns brought up that we need to look at again before we propose a final project," he said.

The public hearing, which lasted almost 45 minutes, gave residents a chance to ask the council questions and voice their concerns and opinions.

Altogether 12 Oneida property owners stood before the council and questioned the proposed changes.

Specifically, several people were concerned with commercial zones encroaching upon upscale residential housing tracts located off Route 5. In addition, residents of Brewer Road disagreed with the city's decision to rezone their land as residential.

Many said that they had moved up to the area, zoned as an agriculture neighborhood, because it gave them more freedom as to what they could do with the land. Others feared that the change in zoning would decrease property values.

"I thought some very legitimate concerns were brought up about the agricultural district and the downtown area," Matzke said, reflecting on the meeting. "The public brought some good issues out for us to look at."

As Matzke mentioned, concerns were also brought up about the downtown area. Property owner Paul Newsom said he is worried about the encroachment of commercial zones upon residential zones. "We are gradually losing our streetscape with these changes," he said.

Newsom added that the city should address the historic district that exists in Oneida. "The city should take in mind the long term effects that zoning changes will have on historic resources," he said.

As for right now, the council is scheduled to vote on the zoning map and ordinance changes on Jan. 17. "We will have a workshop after Christmas sometime to rethink some of the proposed changes," Matzke said. "At that point, we may consider pushing back the date even further."

Also, Matzke said that the zoning maps will remain posted in City Hall. The full-size maps, which are posted upstairs and in the planning department, include the old and new zoning maps of both the inside and outside districts for citizens to compare.

They can be viewed during normal business hours or when City Hall is open for evening meetings.

According to Matzke, the city will still be sending letters to citizens who live on property along the south entrance to the city on Route 46 and some residents on the north side of Fitch Street. "Those letters are still going out," Matzke said. The letters will include a copy of the zoning map, zoning definitions and how to reply to the city.

While Matzke did not confirm that the rest of the property owners in Oneida would receive letters, he did say that he thought Gail Pebbles' idea of putting a copy of the zoning map and definitions in with the tax bills was a good one. The tax bills will

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be sent out in January.