

News

Anderson Meadows project TIF options give council more to think about

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It is likely no one will be entirely pleased with the decision of Hilliard City Council concerning a tax deal for Anderson Meadows, a proposed residential development at Alton-Darby and Roberts roads, but council members say a decision will be rendered Monday, Aug. 23.

After more than an hour of deliberation at the Monday, Aug. 16 meeting of the City Planning, Projects and Services Committee of City Council, members agreed to hold another committee meeting at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 23 at the Hilliard Municipal Building, 3800 Municipal Way.

After a series of alternative tax deals were proposed at an early afternoon meeting Aug. 16 between city officials and the developer, Schottenstein Homes, and unveiled at the committee meeting, council members said they needed time to consider the options.

However, council members were clear a decision would be made and an ordinance, in whatever form that might be, would be sent to City Council for a second reading and public hearing at the Aug. 23 meeting of City Council, at 7 p.m. following the committee meeting.

The two entities with the most at stake had multiple representatives at the Aug. 16 committee meeting.

All three Norwich Township trustees attended. Trustees even moved up their regularly scheduled meeting from 6:30 p.m. to noon to attend.

Hilliard City Schools Assistant Superintendent Tim Hamilton, Treasurer Brian Wilson, and Board of Education members Andy Teater and Lisa Whiting were among the district officials in the audience.

The proposed tax increment finance district for Anderson Meadows, or TIF, is currently proposed as a 10-year, 75 percent. The TIF had originally been proposed as a 30-year, non-school TIF, but raised the ire of Norwich officials who would be saddled with providing fire protection and EMS to the new development without any additional funding.

In a TIF, property tax revenue is diverted for a specific period of time and used to fund the infrastructure needed to support the development.

In the instance of Anderson Meadows, the developer agreed to front the money needed for the infrastructure. Revenue from the TIF would be used to reimburse the developer \$816,000.

But council members determined a 30-year TIF was not necessary as enough revenue to repay the developer could be achieved in 10 years.

The decision chagrined the administration because it was "leaving money on the table," Service Director Butch Seidle said at a previous meeting.

Other necessary projects could be identified after 10 years, Seidle said, and that a 30-year TIF should be adopted and terminated early if no compatible projects materialized.

Unveiled at the Aug. 16 meeting were several alternatives, notably a hybrid model in which one kind of TIF would be applied to the single-family component of the development, and another kind of TIF to the multi-family component.

Anderson Meadows, located on a 50-acre plot on the northeast corner of Alton-Darby and Roberts roads is a proposed development of 76 single-family and 208 multi-family units.

"We disagree with the administration using a TIF for residential development," Norwich Trustee Chuck Buck said.

"If the TIF is bringing jobs and million of dollars here than we are right there with you," Buck said. "We want to be cooperative with the city, but (we) want to be treated fairly."

Buck said the Norwich Township was not the only entity losing money in the deal, so too were Franklin County Children's Services, Metro Parks, the Columbus Metropolitan Library, and many similar tax-supported entities.

Hilliard schools don't stand to lose any money because the city historically reimbursed the district, but school officials remain concerned about the number of students the development will generate.

Using a Power Point presentation, district officials illustrated how enrollment has increased while state funding has decreased.

But city officials voiced some resistance: Councilwoman Stephanie Kunze called out the district for not challenging residential development in the Columbus portion of the school district, and Mayor Don Schonhardt ardently defended the use of TIFs as a tool to provide the community with needed infrastructure.

In fact, a \$4 million project to improve and align Roberts with Alton-Darby roads hangs in the balance of reaching a TIF agreement.

The developer has agreed to donate \$264,000 and loan \$816,000 toward a required match to obtain a \$3 million state grant to fund the road improvements. The TIF is needed to repay the loan.

Paul Coppel, executive vice president of Schottenstein Homes, said he would accept any of the TIF proposal except that which placed a 10-year, 75-percent TIF on the multi-family component of the development, unless the city guaranteed to reimburse him in the event the multi-family development fell through.

"I have no control over the multi-family," Coppel said, because another developer is building the multi-family units.

Schonhardt said the city would make no such commitment, making it apparent a 10-year, 75 percent offer on the multi-family units would kill the deal.

"I hope we can find a fair way to do this," Hilliard school board member Paul Lambert said.

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