

Two weeks ago, SWSNA requested a meeting with Mayor Davlin and his staff to answer questions regarding the proposed Wabash Wal-Mart. After the State Journal-Register began making inquiries, the Mayor agreed to a meeting, and a small group of SWSNA members and our attorney met with the Mayor today.

One of our major concerns was our belief that the City had a new site plan that had been withheld from us in response to a Freedom of Information request. The Mayor assured us that the City was not in possession of a new site plan. The site plan is needed to move forward with the development of the Wabash Wal-Mart.

We asked the Mayor to clarify the process that will take place moving forward to get approval for the site. Step #1 - Wal-Mart will submit the plan to the Sangamon County Land Subdivision Committee. Step #2 - The plan will then be presented to the Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission. Only if the plan requires variances will it have to go before the City Council—and the Mayor told us it is precisely Wal-Mart's intent to avoid a City Council vote.

There followed a freewheeling and frank discussion. We told Mayor Davlin that we will be monitoring every step of the process, because we don't think it is possible for Wal-Mart to propose a variance-free plan which would comply with City ordinances, thereby avoiding the need for a City Council vote. We reminded the Mayor that this project will end up costing the City millions, because Wal-Mart does not plan on improving any roads other than immediately adjacent to the site, and the City will end up picking up the tab. We suggested that is the real reason Wal-Mart wants a "variance-free" plan—that the City Council would doom any plan that will cost the City a bundle. We also informed the Mayor that if necessary, we are prepared to ask the courts to decide the merits of any "variance-free" plan.

The meeting ended with Mayor Davlin committing to the following:

- 1) When the site plan is submitted by Wal-Mart, the City will contact SWSNA so we will have time to review the changes.
- 2) The Mayor will meet with SWSNA to discuss our concerns with the new site plan.
- 3) The Mayor or the City staff will have an open forum for the public to attend before the site plan goes to the Land Subdivision Committee.

We feel we accomplished much in our meeting with the Mayor. Although we certainly have been critics of the Mayor in the past, we are grateful to him for meeting with us, engaging in a frank exchange of views, and committing to further meetings whenever the site plan is filed. We politely thanked Mayor Davlin on our way out.

We also want to thank our members for their support. We are going to need a lot more of it in the coming weeks.

Stay tuned....