

## Star debates growth for hours And that is only the beginning, activist says

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STAR — An outspoken member of a group seeking a moratorium on building and annexations in Star says that a four-hour public hearing on the topic Tuesday was only the beginning of a community discussion on growth.

"What a good debate," said Clint Hinckley of Star Citizens for Smart Growth about the hearing, which attracted more than 200 people to the Star Elementary School gym. "I still believe that a moratorium is in the best interest of the city, but because of the testimonies of last night, whether the public supports that or not is unclear."

"The moratorium stops good growth, as well as bad growth," said Hinckley, who lives on five acres north of Star and works in Boise. "It's a hard decision to make."

The four-member Star City Council voted unanimously Tuesday against the one-year moratorium proposed by Star Citizens for Smart Growth, which has about 300 members who live in or near Star.

Many residents implored the council to impose a temporary ban on building and annexations in order to slow growth while the city's comprehensive plan is updated and a planning and zoning board is established. They cited an overcrowded elementary school, roadways clogged with traffic and concern about higher housing densities detracting from the rural feel of the fast-growing West Ada community.

Council President Chad Bell said the city did not have to impose a moratorium in order to stop or slow annexations to Star.

"We have total control over annexations," Bell said before the council voted down the proposal.

Star's population is between 4,500 and 5,000 residents, according to estimates by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho. The city had fewer than 650 residents in 1990.

The standing-room-only crowd cheered Hinckley's testimony, as well as the approximately 50 others who got up to speak. More than 80 had signed up.

A man who identified himself as a builder during his testimony drew boos, hisses and jeers from the crowd.

DeeAnn Varwig, a Star homemaker and mother of five children ages 12 to 25, said she had mixed feelings, but favored the moratorium because she was concerned about the city's already overcrowded elementary school.

"I'd like to slow down until we have a (new) school in place," she said, adding that she hoped the city's business district would continue to grow.

Varwig did say, however, that fellow Star resident Kevin Nielsen made some good points when he spoke in opposition to the moratorium.

"We must respect the desire and need of our neighbors to sell their property," Nielsen said. "A moratorium would kill economic development in Star."

Chris Yorgason, attorney for the city of Star, said the council could impose a moratorium if it found "imminent peril to the public health, safety or welfare." Peril to the public welfare is not defined in the code, leaving the door open to interpretation.

"It's at the discretion of the city," Yorgason said.

"The council may decide there's imminent peril, but they don't have to. You can't force a city to adopt a moratorium."

In explaining their decisions not to support a moratorium, all four council members said they did not believe anything described by the public rose to the level of "imminent peril."

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