

Zoning decision will affect traffic years from now

By Dan Black
Idaho Press-Tribune

Call it an unexpected controversy. The Nampa City Council took a few soul-searching moments last week to consider annexing and zoning for a development near the intersection of Middleton Road and Karcher Road on Nampa's northwest side. The decision will undoubtedly affect traffic in the area for decades.

The area is designated for mixed use on the city's comprehensive plan, including single-family homes, multi-family homes, and businesses.

When a developer came in with a plan to do just that, Councilmen Bob Schmidt and Stephen Kren balked. The idea, they said, that there could be 552 apartment or condo units as part of this project was unnerving.

They cited traffic concerns and said that it was simply too dense.

There are different ways of thinking about high density of residential units.

In the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho's Communities in Motion plan, planners and residents call for more developments like this, with high-density housing closer to businesses.

This gives people a chance to live closer to where they work, meaning they can walk or drive less. That decreases traffic, helps air quality and puts people in a high enough density that they can be served by transit. It also siphons population growth into urban areas, rather than taking up open space now used for farming.

Dan Black

ON THE ROAD



Traffic comments?

Anyone with story ideas can contact Nampa reporter Dan Black at 465-8117.

tion of rules? (The City of Eagle sure thinks so).

■ Should worries about traffic tilt the decision-making process, and if so, are we to believe principles of urban planning, which suggest high-density rural development has fewer traffic woes than suburban sprawl?

■ And finally, when Mayor Tom Dale takes the reins of COMPASS as the board chairman next year, how will he promote the balance of free market principles and the ideals of good transportation planning? As a politician, he'll probably say there is no contradiction. If he's a statesman, he'll get other people to see that, too.

That's a Stinker

It's very hard to drive into the Stinker gas station on Karcher Road just southeast of the intersection with Nampa-Caldwell Boulevard. Its entryways are a gravel mess, blocked by cones. A clerk there said the station will close sometime soon, when the construction gets closer. Date unknown.

On the up side, Stinker will open a brand-new station on Garrity Boulevard this fall and

Schmidt expressed concern the big investors will build rentals that won't be managed locally and that this sort of thing would give Nampa too much rental capacity. He said he's concerned it would become run-down.

Interestingly, it was the free-market arguments of Tom Dale that broke the tie. While Councilwoman Lynda Clark said the development's quality, such as having amenities like a walking path, park and such, qualifies it for zoning and annexation, Dale said the project should qualify because the market exists for it.

It's interesting to see how some of the daily political debates of our city reflect the great clash of principles in our country. These are complex questions:

■ Should the free market always direct public policy?

■ Should community concerns about the city's future lead to more stringent applica-

will serve up E-85, an ethanol fuel, and biodiesel. Both fuels, along with Stinker's regular 10 percent, high-octane blend, pollute less than regular gasoline products.

It might burn cleaner, but what about that name, "Stinker?"

It's an Idaho company that takes its moniker from slick advertising of the previous century. It's ironic that the cleanest burning fuel in the state has such a name.

The Big Push

The final construction push of the season is underway, with night paving planned for Garrity, big paving going on at the new Karcher Interchange and filling in the remaining links in the Amity Crossing at the railroad tracks. Road restrictions apply to all, inconveniencing many folks. But with shorter days, and eventually snow, these projects will wind down. Time is on the motorists' side.