

Citizens group will monitor Wal-Mart's progress

By PHILLIP HERMANN
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When the city of Hartford Planning Commission considers approval of a final site plan and a certified survey map for the new 184,000-square-foot Wal-Mart SuperCenter on West Summer Street, they can expect a lot of questions from members of Hartford Citizens for Responsible Government.

The 38-acre development, which also will include outparcel commercial ventures, is on a site that eventually drains into the Rubicon River watershed.

City Planner Justin Drew said no date has been set as of yet for the commission to consider either the final site plan or the certified survey map. When those items are put on an agenda, they will not require a public hearing, Drew said, although it's up to the discretion of the planning commission if it wants to allow public comment on a particular item.

The commission would have the final say on the site plan, but will only make a recommendation either for or against the CSM, which gets final approval from the Hartford Common Council, Drew explained.

HCRG member Marilyn Raschka said the group still has serious concerns about the development's impact on the environment and traffic.

"We are only doing this because we're very concerned about the future negative impacts of this Wal-Mart," Raschka said. "We need to address these issues right now because once the damage is done, it's done."

HCRG is working with the Madison-based advocacy group, Midwest Environmental Advocates Inc., a nonprofit environmental law center that has challenged

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Wal-Mart Corp. on other store development projects in the state.

In a release to the media last week by the HCRG, the group stated that "Midwest Environmental Advocates addressed concerns over the unnecessary wetland fill in a formal comment letter, submitted on behalf of Hartford Citizens for Responsible Government, to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."

"Instead of using underground parking to create a smaller building that can be placed in a less sensitive area, Wal-Mart is proposing to pave over the equivalent of 25 football fields in a wetland area on the edge of the city," said Brent Denzin, attorney with MEA, in the press release.

"The community wants an honest and thorough discussion of these impacts,"

said Ray VonGunten, HCRG member, in the release. "The planning commission was set up to address these concerns before approving permits.

The public cannot allow the city to rubber stamp enormous developments when clear impacts exist."

Raschka said HCRG members plan to discuss the matter individually with each person on the nine-member commission, which includes Mayor Scott Henke as chairperson.

City Engineer William Ripp said the Wal-Mart plan for protecting the environment through such things as retention ponds has met the city's requirements.

"We're actually stricter than the DNR (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources), but there's nothing unusual about the Wal-Mart proposal when you consider what has been done previously," Ripp said.

Wal-Mart pact contains specifics

Under terms of the original developer's agreement approved by the city and Wal-Mart Real Estate Business Trust, the company has a number of responsibilities when it comes to stormwater management and pollution control. Some of the specifics include:

- The developer must design and pay for all sanitary sewer main, water main and stormwater management improvements required by the city and DNR.
- The developer must maintain all erosion control measures at its expense to the satisfaction of City Engineer William Ripp throughout the construction process.

That includes using silt control fencing and when that fencing can be removed. The developer is also responsible for such controls for all the buildable lots on the 38-acre project, not just the main store.

The developer must design and install at its own expense all storm sewer mains, detention ponds and appurtenances in accordance with city standards designed to handle all on-site stormwater generated by the development during a 10-year term. The storm sewer construction must abide by Best Management Practices required by the DNR.

The developer will be notified should any type of contamination be discovered and give the developer reasonable time to conduct a cleanup as required by local, state and federal laws.

Under the preliminary site plan approved previously by the Planning Commission and Common Council, Wal-Mart has agreed to place a large detention area at the back of the property.