

Meeting draws 100 who are for, against Bedford Wal-Mart

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TEMPERANCE — A meeting to fight Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.'s unannounced plan to build in Bedford Township near Lewis Avenue and Sterns Road drew more than 100 people and more than \$800 in donations last night.

"Someone has got to keep their eye on what we want in Bedford Township besides the almighty dollar," Connie Ayres, secretary of the newly organized Bedfordwatch, said. "Leave it in Toledo. Put it somewhere else. But not where we are."

Zoning would need to change for a store to be built on the 30 acres that Paul and Jon Whitman told neighbors last month that they plan to sell to Wal-Mart.

Doug Bermick, who lives 500 feet from the lot where the store is proposed, said miles should separate residential areas from large stores.

Wal-Mart would disturb nearby residents because many of its stores are open 24-hours a day and often have night snow removal and garbage pickup and it allows recreational vehicles to spend the night in its parking lots, said Mr. Bermick, who led the meeting.

The competitive threat to small, local businesses and the potential decrease in residential property values are high on his list of concerns. He mentioned potential drainage problems from a large parking lot, exhaust from delivery trucks, and tall parking lot lights.

"It's going to look like Grand Central Station 24 hours a day," he said.

At least one person at the meeting felt otherwise.

Barbara J. Posadny, who was asked to leave the meeting because she was speaking loudly from the back of the room and refused to give her name, said outside the meeting that Wal-Mart has good products for low prices.

She owns property that she said is likely to increase in value if Wal-Mart builds. And she said she resents people who have just recently built houses on farmland from saying that development should be limited now.

"They want to keep it the way it is? Hey, I was here first," she said. "And I'll go out and campaign against them."

But Dennis Rabb, another Bedfordwatch organizer, said he's found longtime township residents are some of the strongest opponents of a large store. He opposes a Wal-Mart anywhere in the township, even on lots with the commercial zoning such a store would need. "Sure you're saving money, but you're paying more in taxes for people who can't support themselves," Mr. Raab said of the store, which does not have union workers.

Bedfordwatch has established a web site and announced a boycott of Whitman Ford Co., owned by the Whitmans.

Last night, the group distributed petitions and asked volunteers to research whether the Wal-Mart might negatively affect police and fire protection services and the roads.