

Commissioners to vote on eminent domain resolution

Saturday, November 14, 2009 11:05 PM

Staff report

After a public hearing Monday, the Rowan County Board of Commissioners will consider adopting a resolution spelling out the county's opposition to condemning land for greenways and other public trails.

Commissioners meet at 7 p.m. on the second floor of the J. Newton Cohen Sr. Administration Building, 130 W. Innes St.

The resolution dealing with a government's condemnation authority, also known as eminent domain, is the sixth item on the agenda and follows three scheduled public hearings on proposed address changes on Poole Road.

The resolution cites the legal authority granted to local governments by state law to condemn private land for public use but goes on to say the Board of Commissioners "proposes to endorse a policy of protection for Rowan County landowners from forced access across their property for development of public trails by means of eminent domain" and won't use the county's legal authority for that purpose.

It also says the county will not endorse or support any other public or private agency's effort to condemn private land for greenways or public trails.

The resolution was prompted by a request for Rowan officials' support by planners of a proposed 15-county network of trails. The Carolina Thread Trail would link communities and sites of interest from Iredell County to Lancaster County, S.C., and from Cherokee County to Anson County, the heart of the textile region.

Existing trails and greenways would make up part of the proposed Carolina Thread Trail, while other pieces would be new and could require crossing private lands to create links.

Some other counties in the region have signed on to the plan. Cabarrus County is actively planning its part in the project, and councils in Kannapolis and Concord have endorsed it.

Rowan commissioners, however, unanimously rejected a resolution in May supporting the county's participation in the Thread Trail. They expressed concerns about potential costs for maintenance and law enforcement, as well as reservations about the possibility of condemning private property for the trail.

The resolution to be considered Monday notes that a land-use plan for western Rowan adopted in April recommends that public trails not cross farms or other private property without the consent of the landowners.

The Rowan County Planning Board voted unanimously to forward to commissioners the resolution opposing the use of eminent domain for public trails.

In other business, the board will consider a resolution to withdraw from the Centralina Council of Governments, discuss an offer from the Rowan County Fair Association to buy the county fairgrounds on Julian Road, and consider approving the design for a county jail annex.

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