

HERMITAGE

Chipotle plans 'ugly building,' planner says

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by Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

Faced with the prospect of recommending approval of a plan they don't like, Hermitage Planning Commission members tabled the proposal for a Chipotle Mexican Grill in hopes that their use of the bully pulpit will result in an acceptable change.

The restaurant is planning to build on the former Hermitage Middle School property on North Hermitage Road, south of the sites for Tim Hortons and Cold Stone Creamery.

While planners had a problem with developer Indian Group I Ltd., Pepper Pike, Ohio, cramming too many buildings onto too small a parcel – there are four building lots, the number that will make the venture profitable, company officials have said – their biggest opposition was a matter of aesthetics.

"It's an ugly building," said commission Chairman Charles E. Rogers and others agreed. "It looks like a temporary building." The exterior of the two-tone gray building would be made of corrugated metal panels and is the company's latest prototype. "This is inconsistent with what we're trying to get and inconsistent with what we're getting from McDonald's and Tim Hortons," Rogers said. McDonald's is the other identified tenant for the former school property.

Rogers wanted to recommend denial of the land-development plan – commissioners have the final say – based on the look of the 2,140-square-foot building, but solicitor Thomas W. Kuster pointed out that the plan conforms to city ordinances, save for a variance request on the south side setback.

Chipotle wants to have a setback of 10.2 feet instead of 20, and the Hermitage Zoning Hearing Board will conduct a hearing on the request Dec. 14. The zoning board granted a similar variance for the Tim Hortons parcel. If the planning commission recommended disapproval of the plan and the zoning board approves it, the plan would come back to the commission in January, city officials said.

By tabling the plan until January, the developers could revise it. Jeffrey A. Deeds, director of development for Visconsi Land Co. Ltd., Pepper Pike, the company that bought the property from Hermitage School District, said Chipotle will offer a new building design.