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Thursday, May 29, 2008

## Decision on Muslim retreat center due June 5

by Jeremy Hauck | Staff Writer  
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The written version of a Walkersville Zoning Board of Appeals decision is scheduled to be released June 5, according to town planner Susan Hauver.

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The report will explain the board's decision in February to deny a Muslim group permission to build a retreat center in town.

Although the final draft of the document arrived at town hall May 12, the appeals board, which was scheduled to meet about the report on May 20, did not approve the report because a board member was out of town, Hauver said.

Appeals board members Dan Thomas, Vaughn Zimmerman and Harold Roderuck in February denied permission for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA to use the 224-acre Nicodemus Farm as a place to gather and worship.

The Muslim group entered into an agreement to purchase the farm from David W. Moxley last year.

Both Moxley and the Muslim group said they are waiting for the written report on the decision before deciding how to respond.

"Until we see the written decision, we don't expect to have any response," Syed M. Ahmad, project manager for the Muslim community, said last week. The group is not looking at other properties, he added.

Moxley's attorney, Roman P. Storzer, of Washington, D.C.-based Storzer and Greene, said in an e-mail to The Gazette that he and his client are "keeping all options open."

Those options include doing nothing, appealing the decision in state court, or challenging the town's decision in federal court, according to Storzer.

The Frederick law firm of Severn, O'Connor and Kresslein prepared the document, Hauver said. Danny B. O'Connor acted as legal counsel to the appeals board during the board's seven days of hearings and four days of deliberations.

Appeals board members argued in their Feb. 7 denial that the Muslims' proposal failed 13 of 14 zoning factors in the town code that address how allowing something other than farming on the land would affect the town.



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