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## Residents protest apartment plans

By Alice Dowty | Posted: Wednesday, October 27, 2010 6:12 pm

WALKER — Nearly 100 residents protested an application for a government subsidized apartment complex on Walker South Road near Interstate 12 Tuesday night at Town Hall.

One of the land owners, Bradley Roberts, also attended the meeting, organized by Neighbors In Action.

Roberts said he and Josh McCoy, son of Parish Councilman Jimmie McCoy, formed Pine Shadows Property, LLC, in 2007 when they jointly purchased the 10 acres for \$1 million.

Plans call for Herman and Kittle Properties, Inc. to buy 8.5 acres of the 10 acre tract for \$2 million, if the Denham Springs Housing Authority (DSHA) application for government funding is successful, Roberts said.

Funding would come from the U.S. Department of the Treasury and a bank loan, Roberts said.

Total cost of the 120-unit apartment complex is estimated at \$17.7 million, according to an e-mail from DSHA Executive Director Fred Banks to Taryn Creekbaum, an organizer of Tuesday's meeting in Walker.

"Our development will be built and managed by Herman and Kittle Properties, Inc. (H&K)," Banks wrote. "H&K develops, builds, owns and manages multi-family rental housing throughout the Midwest and Louisiana and is headquartered in Indianapolis."

H&K owns and manages the Canterbury House Apartments at 2001 South Sherwood Forest Blvd., according to Banks.

The Canterbury House Apartments are near Old Hammond Hwy., Creekbaum said.

The name of the proposed apartment complex at Glen Ellis Road and La. 447 south is The Flats at 447, according to Chase Muller, who is handling the sale for Donnie Jarreau Real Estate.

Muller, who came to Tuesday's meeting with Roberts, said Wednesday that Josh McCoy is no longer part owner of the property.

Pine Shadows Property LLC originally applied to the Parish Planning Commission for a 168-unit apartment complex on the property south of Walker, Muller said.

Muller said part of the parish application process involved wetlands mitigation.

McLin and Associates did a drainage impact study, and a stormwater retention pond on the property would have reduced runoff, Roberts said.

The parish application for the Pine Shadows development expired, and McCoy left the company, Muller said.

About 1,200 people attended a Neighbors In Action protest related to subsidized housing at the Live Oak Middle School gym Sept. 13. The Watson protest concerned a \$3 million planning grant application for a housing development on 100 acres.

The Watson grant application was endorsed by Parish Councilman Jimmie McCoy, who asked for, and received, the full Council's support.

Councilmen withdrew their support when they learned the details of the proposed Watson development.

The required notice for the application for 9 percent tax credits for The Flats at 447 was published on Sept. 16, three days after the Watson housing protest.

"It was terrible timing," Muller said.

The advertised notice states that "estimated funding sources will be tax credit equity and USDA Rural Development financing."

"HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development) has nothing to do with this project," Muller said. "It is not Section 8 housing."

The full application is being processed by the Louisiana Housing Finance Agency (LHFA), Creekbaum said, and will be available to the public on Nov. 15.

Roberts confirmed that The Flats at 447 will have to go before the Planning Commission if the federal grant is approved and the property is purchased by Hermar and Kittle.

Neighbors In Action organizer Gene Baker said that the Parish Council withdrew its application for the Watson housing development grant application after receiving a protest petition with over 900 signatures.

"They listened," Baker said.

A recommendation by the Planning Commission can be brought before the full Council for approval.

The proposed development south of Walker is in Parish Council District 6, represented by Council Chairman Don Wheat.

Parish Planning Commissioner Gerald Burns said Tuesday night that councilmen cannot target a specific part of the parish for a moratorium on building.

Muller said that The Flats would be a "live/work community," and Roberts said it would benefit people with a "median income."

The Flats would have five buildings, each three stories, Roberts said.

Roberts said he plans to develop 1.5 acres as commercial property opposite The Flat on La. 447.

Walker officials are considering an annexation along La. 447 south. Mayor Bobby Font said he was against the proposed apartment complex, but thought that a large protest now would be premature.

“We don’t know if the application (for federal funding) will be approved,” Font said.

Font agreed with audience members who voiced concerns about the impact of an additional 120 residents and/or families on schools and traffic.

“The additional traffic impact on La. 447 just from Our Lady of the Lake is projected to be 1,200 to 1,400 vehicles a day,” Font said.

The state is drawing up designs for a possible widening of La. 447, between Buddy Ellis Road and the north side of the I-12 overpass. Such a widening of the roadway would require purchasing rights-of-way, and would probably take some of the property now planned for The Flats, Font said.

Creekbaum, a Walker resident, said Neighbors In Action would help organize resistance to The Flats.

The group’s website is [www.neighborsNaction.com](http://www.neighborsNaction.com).

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