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Program to support autism program gets zoning approval

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com Apr 5, 2019

A program designed to support Western Kentucky University's Kelly Autism Program and help special-needs adults live independently took a step forward at Thursday night's meeting of the City-County Planning Commission of Warren County.

The commission approved a rezoning application from Garry Watkins and Anthony Elmore of Wabuck Development Co. on a 0.55-acre tract at 1328 Adams St. that is now an apartment building owned by J&T Property Management.

The rezoning from multifamily residential to central business, pending final approval from the Bowling Green City Commission, will clear the way for the property to be renovated to include classrooms, offices and conference space in addition to some apartments.

Watkins said the development plan calls for adding 2,000 square feet to the 14-unit apartment building. The building will then have only six apartments, with the majority of the space being used for programs to support special-needs adults.

Designed to help WKU students who have been part of the Kelly Autism Program's services for students in secondary schools, the Adams Street center will continue that support and assist in the transition to independent living.

"The university operates the clinical education complex that assists children with autism," Watkins said. "Many of those children wind up being students at WKU, but many aren't fully ready for the workforce. What we're developing is a program to assist the students and help them live independently."



The property approved for rezoning will serve the needs of residents of an adjacent apartment complex that will house as many as 34 special-needs adults, Watkins said.

"This property will provide meeting space for social skills and employment counselors who will nurture these young people," he said. "There's nothing like this within 1,000 miles or so. This has the potential to become a groundbreaking pilot program."

Full details of what programming will be offered at the Adams Street facility and how it will be structured will be announced at an April 12 event, according to Clinical Education Complex Executive Director Mary Lloyd Moore.

In other action Thursday, the planning commission approved an application from the
KTKT LLC headed by Kelly Thompson to rezone 3.63 acres at 1850 Blue Level Road from
agriculture to residential estate. The rezoning, which must go to Warren County Fiscal
Court for final approval, will create a separate one-acre lot for an existing home on the
property and add the remaining acreage to an adjacent tract that is already zoned
residential estate.

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