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## Kroger gas station approved for Fairfield

By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — Fairfield residents will be able to get Kroger gas discounts of their own next year, with city council having approved a plan Monday to build a fueling station at the corner of Pleasant Avenue and Nilles Road.

Council passed a motion to construct the station, with only councilman Michael Oler dissenting, citing traffic safety concerns.

The project has been more than a year in the making and has undergone significant redesign to comply with city requirements. Whereas most Kroger fuel stations have only a small kiosk, the Fairfield one will have a 1,000-square-foot store. It would replace the long-shuttered Taco Bell and Flowerama buildings at that corner. The station is also unusual in that it's not adjacent to the store itself, which is located on Wessel Drive.

Council members approved the project because many residents had said they wanted it. Councilman Tim Abbott said he had a document with thousands of signatures from residents approving the gas station. In addition, four residents spoke at Monday's meeting, all in favor of the project.

"I'm listening to the residents, and the residents want it," said Councilwoman Debbie Pennington.

Councilman Adam Jones said in this case, the system worked, with a compromise between Kroger and the city.

"The planning and review commission did their job," he said.

Councilman Jeffrey Holtegel, who is also a member of the planning commission, said that he "did not particularly like the use, but at this point, it meets the minimum requirements."

Oler said he was concerned about the volume of the traffic the Kroger gas station would create, and that the intersection was "bad enough as it is." But Jack Pflum, the owner of JEP Consulting Engineering, studied the potential traffic in the area, saying the gas station would not make the intersection any more hazardous.

"Volume is not the driver of unsafe conditions. Design is the the driver," he said, adding that he feels the design as proposed by Kroger is safe.

Mayor Ron D'Epifanio did not have a vote Monday because all of council was present, but he said if he did, he would have voted against it.

“People are not going to be able to get in and out of that thing. It’s going to pass, and I think it’s wrong,” he said.

Resident Kathy Dove told council, “Kroger believes in Fairfield. I want Fairfield to believe in Kroger.”

Monte Chesko, a real estate manager for Kroger, said, “It was a grueling process, but we’ll do our best to live up to the standards.”

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