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W.Va. office project debate heats up again

CHARLES TOWN, W.VA.

■ Jefferson County Commission members considered taking a vote on the controversial project.

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The ongoing controversy over whether to rezone the Old Standard Quarry was almost resolved Thursday.

A Jefferson County Commis-

sioner attempted Thursday to deny rezoning the former rock quarry near Harpers Ferry, W.Va., that would allow a controversial \$250 million office project, but the commission did not proceed with the action after a county attorney said it appeared the commissioners could not vote Thursday.

Commission attorney James Casimiro flipped through the county's agenda Thursday and the agenda mentioned the Old Standard Quarry in several places.

But Casimiro told the commissioners he did not believe they could vote on the issue because none of the agenda

items talked about a possible vote on the issue.

Commission member Jim Surkamp made the motion to deny rezoning the quarry from an agricultural zone to a commercial zone, saying such a move would be going down a "dangerous path."

Commission President Frances Morgan expressed concerns about the rezoning issue taking up the commission's time and said ongoing discussions about conditions that could be put in place to control the design of a proposed \$250 million office and hotel project along Millville Road were a "distraction."

Commission member Rusty Morgan said he had thought the commission needed more time to study the issue but Morgan said he had "completely changed" his mind.

Rusty Morgan said the office and hotel project "were out of scale for anything we've seen in the past" in the county and said there was no guarantee that the project would generate new jobs.

Surkamp and Rusty Morgan have said previously that they believed the commission would vote 3-2 to reject the rezoning request.

Surkamp tried to get Frances Morgan to say Thursday

how she planned to vote on the rezoning but she declined, and the commission decided to table the issue.

A motion to put the issue up for a vote next Thursday was supported by Frances Morgan, Rusty Morgan and Surkamp.

Commissioners Dale Manuel and Greg Corliss, who want to study the issue further, voted no.

Five developers including Herb Jonkers, Gene Capriotti and Lee Snyder have proposed the development, saying it would boost the county's economy and generate about 6,000 jobs.

Opponents worry about the

traffic it would generate and said it would be too close to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Opponents and supporters of the project continued to appear before the commission to offer comments Thursday.

The commission also discussed the issue of water from the quarry being considered as a water source for a proposed power plant that would be built near Frederick, Md. by Catocin Power LLC.

Water would be needed for the plant for cooling, and several possibilities are being considered for water sources, officials said.