



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE


KDOT has refused to approve a variance for construction of a new volunteer fire station in the City of Leonardville. KDOT is involved because the proposed station entrance/exit fronts on State Highway 24/Barton Road, within Leonardville's downtown business district. KDOT has authority to deny any request for any variance because fire trucks housed at the proposed new station will exit and enter from State Highway 24/Barton Road.

KDOT staff believes Riley County Fire District #1's attached proposed design for location of this building represents a health and safety danger to the public. In contrast, Riley County Commissioners believe the attached design should be approved by KDOT, is a rational and logical placement of the facility, and does not represent a health and safety concern for the travelling public. The Board of Riley County Commissioners believes KDOT should grant the requested variance because:

1. Riley County Volunteer Fire Department Records show the existing Leonardville fire station has generated only 9 fire calls annually, when averaged over the past 5 years. So with less than 1 call expected every month, there is not enough regular fire engine "traffic" to warrant a legitimate public safety concern.
2. The speed limit within Leonardville on State Highway 24/Barton Road is only 30 m.p.h. So there isn't much real risk of a collision between private vehicles and fire trucks leaving the proposed station. Besides the low speed limit on Highway 24/Barton Road, there are clear sight lines for oncoming traffic to the east and west of the proposed fire station. That means both the travelling public and firefighters will have ample opportunity to see one another long before any accident could occur.
3. If this variance is granted, KDOT standard highway regulations will allow for additional curb cuts between the alley and the next street to the west of the proposed station. Without the variance, KDOT believes that the existing alley to the east of the proposed station should be used for ingress and egress from the proposed fire station. But the State fire code requires a minimum of 20' for any fire department access road. The alley's driving surface is only 14' wide and serves as a one-way entrance to the neighboring local bank's drive-through.

4. The citizens of Leonardville have made it clear in public meetings they want this new building in their city's downtown business district. They know it represents an opportunity to show theirs is a thriving community with a viable downtown.

Given the apparent low risk to public health and safety represented by our preferred design, the Board of Riley County Commissioners believes it is in the best interest of the citizens of Leonardville that KDOT grant the Fire District's request for a variance. It is particularly unsettling the variance has been denied, since existing fire stations currently operate successfully and safely with entrance/exit points on state highways in the following communities: Belvue, Blue Rapids and Pomona.



Ronald E. Wells, Chairman



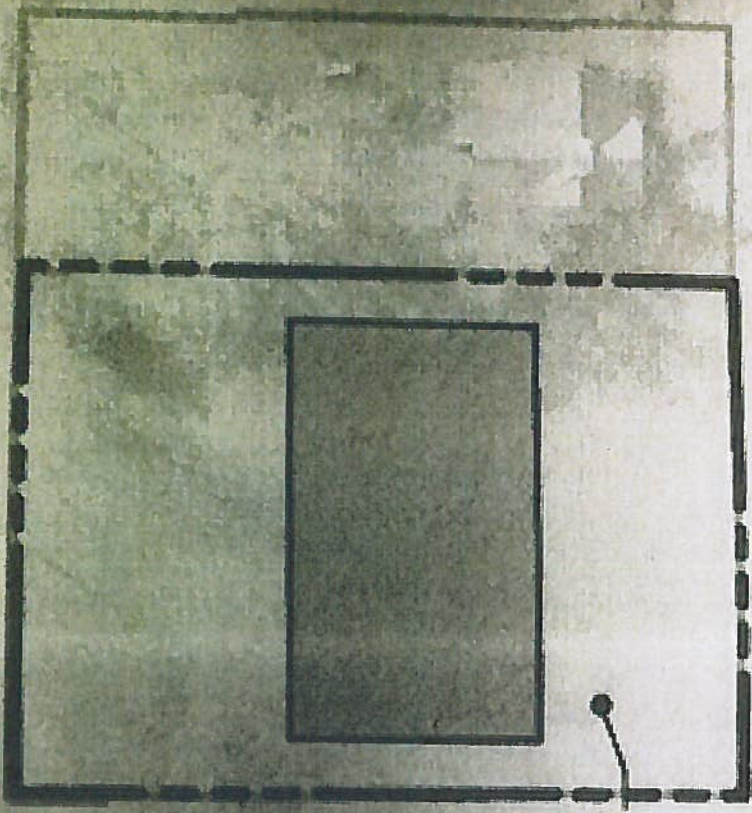
Marvin Rodriguez, Vice Chairman



Ben Wilson, Member

KANSAS STREET

W BARTON ROAD / HWY 24



SITE