

## Kroger redesigns proposed gas station

By Eric Robinette, Staff Writer

8:41 PM Wednesday, July 11, 2012

**FAIRFIELD** — Officials with Kroger have moved closer to getting a one-of-a-kind gas station at its store in Fairfield.

The project, in the works since late last year, had been stalled because the original designs were rejected by both the design review committee and the planning commission, said Tim Bachman, the city's director of development services.

Now, Kroger has responded with a new design that is unlike any other Kroger gas station in the area. Instead of a small kiosk to sell items, like other Kroger gas stations have, this one will have a full-fledged convenience store.

"Instead of a 176-square foot kiosk, this one will have a 1,000 square-foot store you can go into," Bachman said. No other Kroger gas station in this area has a store that size, he added.

The kiosk conflicts with the zoning code for that particular area around Village Green. The Kroger, built in 2002, is on Wessel Drive. In the years since that Kroger was built, gas stations have become part of Kroger's business model.

City council is not expected to vote on the project until a third reading of the ordinance in September, but Kroger representatives and residents asked council Monday to move forward with the new gas station.

Store Manager Tony Spaeth said he has addressed numerous concerns raised about the existing grocery, including excessive litter in the parking lot, pressure-washing the walk in front of the store once a month, and dealing with the problem of shopping carts drifting away from the lot.

"This is my neighborhood too, and I want it to look good to all the customers," he said.

Resident Leslie Besl said, "Anyone I've talked to has been full force in favor of it ... (they) will be disenchanted with city council if this doesn't move forward."

Jeff Holtegel, a city councilman and a member of the planning commission, said, "There have been enough changes that it's palatable to everyone at this point."

That said, Holtegel still has his misgivings. Zoning regulations had been designed to prohibit two uses in that area - gas stations and dry cleaners.

"It's an appropriate use but it's not something I'd like to see in the downtown area," Holtegel said.

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