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Tuesday, June 07, 2005

BZA turns down ponds near airport

BY DAVE KURTZ

AUBURN — The DeKalb County Board of Zoning Appeals has rejected a plan to build two ponds a mile south of the DeKalb County Airport.

The board voted 4-0 to deny a special exception allowing ponds of 3.3 and 3.7 acres at Diamond Lake Estates on C.R. 64. Stuart and Tamra Stier asked permission for the ponds in their proposed 64-lot residential subdivision.

Board members said the ponds would attract geese that could be hazardous to airplanes.

The denial applies only to ponds over 3 acres in size, however.

The Stiers are scheduled to ask for approval of their housing development as a whole on June 15 at a DeKalb County Plan Commission meeting. They could submit a new plan showing ponds smaller than 3 acres.

The Plan Commission still will consider whether to allow any permanent ponds. At a meeting May 24, the commission postponed voting until it hears a plan for controlling geese.

A presentation by Jeffrey Ling, president of Flock Fighters USA, failed to sway the BZA Monday night.

Ling said geese can be discouraged by designing ponds with steep drop-offs and taking steps such as planting fescue grasses instead of bluegrass near the ponds.

Two airport officials objected.

“Just because we can potentially solve a problem doesn’t mean let’s go ahead and create it in the first place,” said Brad Stump, treasurer of the airport’s governing board.

Airport manager Russ Couchman warned that permitting the ponds could violate assurances the airport gave to get federal grants. He said Federal Aviation Administration guidelines recommend against creating new bodies of open water within 10,000 feet of a runway. Diamond Lake Estates lies within 5,000 feet, Stump said.



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BZA member James Stahl said the ponds are not a necessity, because the Stiers can develop their land without them.

The Stiers' attorney, James Federoff, had asked the BZA to leave the issue of geese control to the Plan Commission next week. He said Ling would make a more detailed presentation then.

After the BZA's vote, Federoff huddled with the Stiers in the courthouse hallway. Later, he said, "We've got some decisions to make."

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