

Planners OK greenhouse plan

By Denise Allabaugh ^{C.V.}
Citizens' Voice Staff Writer ²¹⁷⁻⁰⁰

Wilkes-Barre's planning commission granted Wilkes University unanimous approval Wednesday to construct a campus greenhouse support facility at 175 and 181 S. Franklin St.

According to Wilkes University spokesman Mark Davis, students and faculty of the university's biology department will use the 20-foot by 40-foot facility to grow plants and for academic research. Construction will begin when the weather breaks, he said.

Jack Zikoski, director of facilities and management at Wilkes, presented a map to the planning commission of Wilkes' long-range plan for land development. He said the university is now working on plans for a parking lot.

"This is a dynamic plan and it is subject to change continually," Zikoski told the commission.

Planning director Jack Varaly said the plan presented was an update to a 1994 plan, which was never adopted by the university.

"To me, this is not a long-range plan," said planning commission member Jo Ellen Bell.

Pointing out that the University of Scranton has a long-range plan for

development, Bell said she wanted assurance that historic buildings in the Wilkes University neighborhood would be preserved in the future.

"Some of those buildings are historically significant," Bell said. "Part of the planning commission's responsibility is to preserve that neighborhood."

Planning commission member Sue Straussman suggested that officials from Wilkes University, King's College, Wyoming Valley Health Care System and Mercy Hospital update the planning commission every three months on land development plans. These four non-profit institutions own a substantial amount of property in the city.

Straussman motion was approved, but Bell and Planning

Commission Chairman Thomas Nardone voted against it, re-iterating a need for long-range plans.

In other business, Wilkes-Barre resident Patrick J. Gildea received unanimous approval to transform a vacant building at North Main and West Chestnut streets into a brokerage business with a coffee house for clients.

Gildea said the building has been vacant for 50 years. It was last used a tavern with a two-family unit included in the structure.

"It needs a lot of work but it's a nice old building. It appeals to me aesthetically. I'd like to bring it back to life," Gildea said. "That area seems to be sleeping and this will wake up that neighborhood."