

# Dyer panel endorses installing noise barrier along CN tracks

13 hours ago • Mary Wilds Times Correspondent nwi.com

DYER | A money transfer approved by the Economic Development Commission will go toward putting up a barrier between the Canadian National Railway tracks and the Rockwell and Hearthstone neighborhoods.

The Town Council had asked the commission to transfer \$180,000 from its budget to the general fund. That request came after Hearthstone and Rockwell residents told Dyer they needed relief from the constant train traffic to the north of their neighborhoods.

The money is meant to help fund an evergreen barrier between the tracks and neighboring homes. Since CN acquired the tracks, train runs have gone from a few per day to more than 20.

When the tracks are in full use, runs could go to 34 per day and beyond, Town Administrator Rick Eberly told the EDC.

Commission President Jim Storm voted against the money transfer, not because he was unsympathetic, he told residents, but because he wasn't sure if this was the right plan or the right choice of funding.

The EDC was given \$200,000 earmarked for economic development from Canadian National when the rail giant purchased tracks in Dyer. CN also paid for safeguards necessary to create quiet zones at two crossings south of the tracks.

The proposed barrier would benefit a small percentage of residents, he said. And it will be taken from economic development money meant for the town as a whole.

Moreover, the proposal as presented may be akin to putting on "a kind of Band-Aid on a huge sore," Storm said.

Steve Kramer, one of the two members who voted yes, said he was onboard with the proposal.

Town officials "are supposed to be problem-solvers," he said, and the transferred money will go toward solving residents' problems.

The third member, Paul Nelson, said he had concerns about the proposal, but because the Town Council made the request, the EDC should defer to the council.

However, at Nelson's suggestion, the resolution approved by the board stipulated that the money be returned to the EDC if not used for the purpose intended within five years.

Town Attorney Bill Enslin reminded all those in attendance that final project costs likely will exceed the money just allocated. There will have to be surveys and engineering, as well as cooperation from adjacent property owners.

All told, the initial cost of screening the south side of the tracks could reach \$350,000, he said. And if a screen is also placed to the north between Briar Crossing and the tracks, costs will increase.

Mark Drenth, who with Brian Oberc has served as spokesman for the Hearthstone and Rockwell neighborhoods, again helped make the residents' case prior to the vote.

The screening will benefit more than just the 77 homes which abut the rail property, he said. The increased train traffic impacts many homes in both subdivisions.

The railcars are often an eyesore because of their graffiti, and the noise and vibration during each run affects residents' quality of life.

Rockwell and Hearthstone residents purchased homes next to a track experiencing only a few runs a day, he said. But train traffic went up dramatically after CN purchased the tracks, and residents are now concerned about property values as well as their quality of life.