

DNJ.com, Kevin Fisher contends all residents should get public notices (4.25.12)

MURFREESBORO — Plaintiff Kevin Fisher contends the Rutherford County government's failed to provide adequate public notice before approving a mosque.

"The county has a history of not notifying residents when issues of relevance to the community are being debated," Fisher testified today during the first day of a two-day trial.

The trial will resume at 8:15 a.m. Thursday in Chancellor Robert E. Corlew III's courtroom on the third floor of the County Judicial Building on the Public Square in Murfreesboro.

Fisher and other plaintiffs say the government violated the open meeting law by not providing adequate public notice before the Rutherford County Regional Planning Commission approved construction plans for the Islamic Center of Murfreesboro to build 52,960 square feet May 24, 2010. The ICM started the first 12,000 square feet in September, and its contractor then estimated this Phase I project to be completed by the end of July on Veals Road off Bradyville Pike.

Fisher said he found out about the ICM getting government approval from an email after the meeting and decided to lead a grassroots effort to oppose the government's actions.

"I have a history for standing up for injustice," Fisher said. "The public should have had the right to be present when the decision is made. We never had that opportunity."

County defense attorney Josh McCreary contends that the county's May 2, 2010, public notice in The Murfreesboro Post about the time and place of the planning commission's May 24, 2010, meeting met the requirement for adequate public notice.

Fisher, though, said the county should have made far greater efforts to get the word out before examining the mosque issue.

"Every possible effort should be made to make sure that every citizen has an opportunity to decide if they want to be a part of this issue or not," Fisher said.

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