

## **Community hears about reorganization plan**

**By Jennifer Dawson/Times Sentinel managing editor**

Gene Thompson, chairperson of the government reorganization committee, addressed a small crowd at the Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance's quarterly public meeting Monday, March 24.

Thompson gave an overview of the government reorganization plan, which was approved Wednesday, March 12, and will be forwarded to Eagle and Union townships and Zionsville for consideration. He described the plan as creating a 52 square-mile town, emphasizing that even if residents don't live in the town limits, people from Eagle and Union townships and Zionsville make up one community whose members attend the same churches and belong to many of the same community groups.

"As a community we don't live by the boundaries established years ago," Thompson said.

With reorganization, the services, tax rate and ordinances of each district would remain basically the same. The major difference is in street and police services. The Boone County highway and sheriff's departments would serve the rural district; the Zionsville street and police departments would serve the town district. County services cost less than the town services, and will account for most of the difference between rural and urban tax rates.

Currently, the Zionsville Fire Department serves the entire consolidated area; that would continue.

Representation on the Zionsville Town Council would expand to seven. In 2010, when the council is up for re-election, five of the members would be elected from districts, with two at-large members.

The most dramatic change involves planning and town council. The Zionsville planning department and planning commission would be responsible for planning and zoning for the entire consolidated area.

Lynn Jenkins of Union Township was mostly concerned about planning.

"The town of Zionsville has a lot of power, and if they suddenly own us, the rural people, we lose our voice."

Jenkins was referring to the fact that the makeup of the 2010 town council under the reorganization would include the current five town council members and one representative each from Eagle and Union townships. Jenkins said this is a disproportionate amount of "town people."

Thompson explained that planning in Eagle and Union townships is controlled by the Boone County Area Plan Commission with no representation required from either township and the proposed Zionsville Planning Commission would actually give the rural people more representation.

Eagle Township Board of Trustee Judith Essex agreed.

"The Zionsville Planning Commission would give us control over what happens to us ... the decision won't be made by county people who don't live here," Essex said.

Thompson added that the impact on schools is a top planning concern.

“Nothing is more impacted by planning than the schools, and vice versa.”

Connie Leatherman of Eagle Township wanted to know how the reorganization affects Whitestown.

Thompson said Whitestown would not be able to annex any more of Eagle Township under the new plan, but the part Whitestown already annexed could not become part of a reorganized Zionsville.

Overall, Thompson said, there will be a larger “community feel.”

He said the members of the 9-member reorganization committee — three representatives from Zionsville, three from Union and three from Eagle — are not being lobbied or paid off, they are just nine citizens giving their input.

“It is refreshing to see our government ask us what we think,” Thompson said.