

# Government reorganization committee almost done

By Ben Woodson/Times Sentinel writer

— The government reorganization committee wants to get feedback from elected officials before it creates a final plan. The committee, officially called Communities of the Zionsville Area for a Better Government, intended to have a complete plan approved during its Dec. 13 meeting, but Chairman Gene Thompson said instead the committee will vote on a executive summary that leaves several options open.

After a 60-day comment period, the committee will meet to review the feedback from elected officials and to finalize the plan. Because of the extra 60 days, the voter referendum required to pass the plan should be on the November ballot instead of May, Thompson said. To take effect, the plan must be approved by Union and Eagle township boards and the Zionsville Town Council, and then receive a majority of the vote in each geographical area in a referendum.

The committee's general plan is to have multiple service areas encompassing all of Zionsville, Eagle and Union townships that receive different levels of service and also different tax rates. The committee didn't have much disagreement about what services should be in which area, Thompson said. Generally, the rural areas would have a lower level of service and lower tax rate, and the town area would have a higher level of service and a higher tax rate; the level of both the tax rate and service level should stay similar to what people experience now.

There is disagreement regarding where the border between the rural and urban areas should be drawn, and how and when an area would move from the rural to town area and to the higher tax rate, Thompson said. The other major area in which the committee wants feedback from elected officials is with representation on the reorganized Zionsville Town Council, which would represent all of Eagle and Union townships.

At the Dec. 13 meeting, the committee will discuss the options in these controversial areas and forward them to elected officials from Zionsville, Union and Eagle townships for feedback.

Aside from these issues, the committee's plan is almost complete.

## Law enforcement and fire

The most costly difference between the rural and town areas is street service and law enforcement, Finance Subcommittee Chairman Joe Turk said. The town service area would be served by the Zionsville Police Department, which has active patrols on the streets. The rural area would be served by the Boone County Sheriff's Department, which only responds to calls and does not actively patrol. The town area would also have more street services, making it more expensive than the rural area's minimal level of street service.

Fire and EMS protection would not be affected because the Zionsville Fire Department already provides service to both Eagle and Union townships.

Some services will cover the whole area. The parks department subcommittee recommended the Zionsville Parks and Recreation Board become a regional parks board for all of Eagle and Union.

## Parks

The number of parks board members cannot be increased past the current number because of state law, Parks Subcommittee Chairman Steve Freeland said. The board members from Zionsville would stay on until their terms end, and then be replaced by newly appointed members. The committee cannot include a geographic requirement for these appointments, but Freeland said he hopes the new parks board would give equal representation to each geographic area.

## Planning

The Zionsville Planning Department would also assume planning and zoning authority for the

whole area. Currently, it has control within the town limits, and the county controls outside the town limits. The reorganized Zionsville Plan Commission and Zionsville Town Council would have approval authority over zoning changes and plans for any new development within all of Eagle and Union.