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Lawyer Calls Maryland Town's Decision to Bar Muslim Group From Gatherings 'Discriminatory'

Friday, February 08, 2008 Associated Press

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WALKERSVILLE, Md. — A lawyer specializing in religious rights cases says a decision barring an American Muslim group from holding large gatherings in the town of Walkersville is "irrational and discriminatory."

The unanimous vote by the Walkersville Board of Zoning Appeals ended a marathon public hearing totaling 11 days over four weeks.

The board decided that national gatherings of up to 10,000 Ahmadiyya Muslims would overwhelm roads and emergency services in the Frederick County town of 5,600. The board denied the group a special exception to use agricultural land for religious purposes.

But attorney Raymond Storz, who represents the prospective seller of the land in question, says the decision could lead to a federal lawsuit claiming violation of the group's religious freedoms.

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