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Dismayed by editorial on Walkersville, AMC

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Your Feb. 13 editorial ("Let it be") recommends that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and David Moxley give up in their attempt to use the 224-acre parcel in Walkersville as a mosque for a few dozen families and their annual Jalsa Salana event. While my client and the AMC have not made any decisions at this point, I have to take issue with your characterization of the board's denial as merely based on "sound, code-based justifications."

In fact, the AMC's thorough demonstration that its use would not create any undue negative impact on the community was uncontradicted by any actual evidence, as opposed to mere speculation and fear-mongering. What the evidence did establish is that local drivers may be slightly inconvenienced for a few hours one weekday annually. Are our fundamental freedoms so cheap that they can be set aside because it may take a few minutes longer to get home from work once a year?

The granting of the Banner School's application -- a use that will generate much more traffic throughout the year -- by the board after only a few minutes of deliberation certainly raises at least the question of unfair treatment. And who actually believes that the introduction of an amendment banning places of worship from the agricultural zone two days after the AMC's presentation was mere coincidence?

The Constitution and civil rights laws protect the AMC and all of us against actions like these, just as they protect all of us from denials of other fundamental rights. Should it have been said that African-Americans being denied the vote "let it be?" Or that women denied job opportunities should "let it be?" Or that disabled individuals denied access to government buildings should "let it be?"

As for the legal prediction that "a challenge to the zoning board's ruling would fail," in my experience -- and I have been involved in more church zoning cases across the country than any other attorney -- these are the most egregious circumstances that I have ever confronted. Sometimes the right thing to do is not necessarily the popular thing, as I told the board. They chose the latter and decided to roll the dice; they will have to accept the outcome. Whatever action the AMC and Mr. Moxley decide to take, the town has brought it upon itself.

Roman P. Storzer is an attorney

representing David Moxley, on whose

Walkersville land the AMC seeks to build

a worship and recreation center.

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