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Trustees approve addition plan

By Barbara Toman
and Christopher Cokinos
I ds Staff Writers

INDIANAPOLIS — The IU Board of Trustees approved new plans Saturday for the law school addition, but it wasn’t apparent if everyone involved in the three-month controversy was satisfied.

The plans, a revision of ones the trustees approved in December, remove the addition from the section of the Old Crescent listed on the National Register of Historic Places. An undetermined number of trees would have to be removed directly behind the law school.

The plans also include provisions for minimizing heat and light pollution that could make Kirkwood Observatory useless.

The trustees’ action came at their monthly meeting at IU-Purdue University at Indianapolis, but most of the discussion occurred Friday "before the board’s architectural committee.

Law school Dean Sheldon Plager told the committee the new plan meets all the law school’s program requirements. “It gets us out of the woods — literally and figuratively.”

No one from Save the Woods, an organization formed to fight the law school expansion, was at the meeting. A spokesman said Sunday that no one in the group had seen the plans, but they would be discussed at a meeting at 7 tonight in Lindley 115.

The astronomy department, however, was represented. Associate astronomy professor Martin Burkhead said he was “shocked” to see a major entrance to the proposed addition on the northeast end, opposite Kirkwood Observatory.

“There is no way you are going to draw shades on (the lighted entrance) at night,” Burkhead said.

But one of the project’s New York architects, Robert Welz, said the entrance will be hidden behind arched openings with pillars that block the light. Welz said the lights will shine directly down, and he noted that the entrance will be on the addition’s ground level, below the observatory’s base.

To block light from the windows, Welz said venetian blinds or shades can be installed that would automatically shut at night.

And to help prevent heat “shimmers,” which distort astronomers’ viewing, Welz said the roof can be covered with heat-reflecting white marble chips.

When Burkhead protested that he wasn’t sure the chips would be adequate, Welz said he didn’t think the shimmers would reach the observatory’s line of sight and that the entrance will be on the addition’s ground level, below the observatory’s base.

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