

OCTOBER 27, 2014 Plan Commission Meeting

The Plan Commission met at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, October 27, 2014 at the Town Hall in New Munster. Chairman William Glembocki opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Plan Commission members present signing the attendance sheet: Chairman William Glembocki, Clayton Wagner, Dennis Robers, Paul DeLuisa, Mary Ochoa-Petersen, and Randy Schulz. Sue Riley and Vince Mosca were excused.

Also present: Supervisors Andrew Lois and Kelly Wilson, Clerk Sheila Siegler, Jay R. Christie, Maggie Madden, Jamie Gill - Bear Realty, Randy Sherwood, Ron Dembowski, Wanda Dembowski, Susan Gehring, David Gehring, Gary Kerkman, Mary Sekey, Marshall Nepras, Don Payette, Alaina Blanchard, Brian Sekey, Steve Ellingson, Jack Anselm, Pam Anselm, Jim Tyler, Nancy Tyler, Ken Gillmore, Maggie Oberhofer, LeNora Ketterhagen, Donald Ketterhagen, Laura Holmstrom, Tim Holmstrom, Rich Kerkman, Carol Kerkman, Tom Kerkman, Norm Robers, Judy Robers, Brian Vogt, Penny Vogt, Bill Jecevicus, Jan Jecevicus, Don Guzzetta, Carol Guzzetta, Patti Kerkman, and William Bruno.

Meeting notices were posted in six public places and newspapers were notified. Meeting notice was also placed on the town website. Property owners within 300 ft. of Tax Parcel #95-4-219-343-0900 were notified of the meeting by First Class Mail.

Minutes of the January 27, 2014, June 23, 2014, and September 22, 2014 Plan Commission meetings were moved for approval by Dennis Robers and second by Clayton Wagner. Motion carried.

Public Comments - none

Chairman Glembocki read the next agenda item and stated this meeting was for informational purposes only. This is a new concept for the area and this meeting is an opportunity for the public and neighbors to provide early feedback concerning the proposal.

Informational Meeting -

Location - 5808 352nd Ave.; Property Owner - Stanley & Dorothy Kerkman;

Tax Parcel #95-4-219-343-0900

Prospective buyer: Jay R. Christie

Discussion regarding a proposal for a Safari Ranch. Land use map change to Park and Recreational and rezoning to PR-1 - Park-Recreational with a Conditional Use Permit would be requirements of any approval.

Jay Christie spoke with Maggie Madden assisting and gave a video presentation outlining what their vision of a Safari Farm entailed and gave examples of similar ranches in residential areas. Animals would be bison, elk, Texas longhorn cattle, yaks, camels, llamas, alpacas, ostriches and emus, among others. There would be no lions, tigers or other animals that could pose a threat to public safety. They would have "safari" wildlife-viewing vehicles and tour the property for 60 min. while listening to an audio presentation about the animals.

Jay Christie is the recent CEO of the Racine Zoo and both he and Maggie Madden have a background in animal biology and wildlife. He said the safari farm would be open May 1 - October 31, 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. daily. Traffic, parking, gift shop, his intention to live on the premises, fencing, housing for animals, manure disposal were all discussed. He would plan to open in June 2015.

Concerns of the residents of the area who were in attendance:

1. Traffic - a successful enterprise will generate lots of traffic. "50" intersection is difficult to enter now. There are no traffic lights.
2. Types of activities once the property is rezoned if this particular venture is not a success.
3. Animal care - housing in the winter months, possible disease, veterinarian on call.
4. Type of fencing for those neighbors who would be viewing from their house
5. Parking - not enough room, with the creek running thru, for parking lot, "safari" vehicles, cars entering and exiting. Need more non-wetland acres for something like this.
6. Decreasing property values - traffic thru the subdivision, gawkers trying to see thru the fencing, noise from "safari" vehicles, address system and audio presentations, security if an animal gets loose, lighting.
7. Wells and sanitation issues.
8. What does this benefit the town and the neighborhood?
9. New Munster Creek runs thru the property with corresponding wetlands. DNR will have concerns about runoff, filling, any bridges, etc.

Chairman Glembocki said this was only an informational meeting. Nothing will be done tonight.

Commissioner Clayton Wagner said part of the job of the plan commissioners is listening. He asked for a show of hands for and against. One person raised a hand in favor; others were in opposition.

Jay Christie thanked everyone for coming and said he appreciated the candid feedback. He would not be presenting this proposal if he believed it would be a negative factor for property values.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m. on a motion moved by Commissioner Paul DeLuisa and second by Commissioner Mary Ochoa-Petersen.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila M. Siegler, Town Clerk