

ONEKAMA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

AND REGULAR MEETING THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2017

6:30 P.M., ONEKAMA TOWNSHIP HALL

PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING LITTLE EDEN CAMP

The hearing was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairman Jim Trout.

PURPOSE OF HEARING: Trout explained the purpose of the hearing for Little Eden Camp is to receive input on a request for an Amended Special Use Permit based on a site plan and narrative explanation, which would allow them to expand the existing camp by: replacing old cabins, adding a new chapel and develop property on the north side of Portage Point Drive. The property is directly across from the main camp and development would consist of new cabins and an indoor activity center as shown on the site plan and master plan drawings.

APPLICANT'S PRESENTATION: Wayne Faber, Executive Director of Little Eden Camp, said the Camp Board assessed current needs of the camp. They are: additional cabin space for family camps with a youth camp friendly design; larger chapel that could double as off season meeting space, indoor activity space for rainy, cold days; increased dining and office space. Faber said it was clear to the board that many regular campers needed a larger or additional cabin because their families have grown due to the addition of the next generation. He said the camp has over 546 different individuals or families on its waiting list who want to be part of the family camp program, but can't. Addition of new cabins would also house the youth camp. Currently, the camp is at our cabin capacity for our youth program.

He said the camp did a survey (in 2013) and only 10 per cent responded to that survey, but that 10 per cent brought in \$40,000 to the community.

Trout stepped in to introduce the commissioners: Al Taylor, Jon Phillips, Beata Hunt, Roger Cody, Trout, Robert Blackmore. Absent: Tom Volkema. Also present: Recording Secretary Mary Lou Millard, Zoning Administrator Kristine Philpot.

Continuing the presentation:

In answer to a question on color designations on the proposed new site plan, Farber said red is for Phase I; green is Phase II and purple is Phase III.

Trout asked if the road needs to be re-platted. Faber said the road was not built where the right-of-way was originally designated.

Trout said primary concern is pedestrian traffic on Portage Point Drive.

Faber : We looked at different options, it is best to do pedestrian traffic and the pedestrian path is best by the well. We want it safe; we can get signs for pedestrian crossing.

Architects for Little Eden camp introduced themselves: Dennis Meekhof and Dean DeKryder of DK Design. Meekhof said the road commission is not opposed to a pedestrian crossing; there would be guides to funnel people to the north side. We can direct people to the crossings.

Farber: We want to make it the most safe and convenient way.

Trout: Since you recently reconfigured the parking lot, I'm concerned about pedestrian traffic. What about a pedestrian overpass?

Farber: We are not proposing this; didn't feel this was the best way.

CORRESPONDENCE: Trout said five letters were received. Four in favor of the project: Claire & Lu Nussbaum, Jason Nussbaum, Steven Nussbaum, Ron Roth. Letter in opposition was received from Steve Voran. One opposed was from Laurel Voran, who also spoke at the meeting.

COMMENTS IN FAVOR:

---Judith Spohn: For over 40 years I have known Little Eden Camp as part of the Resort Community on Portage Point Drive. Always Little Eden has been in keeping with the lakeside/resort character of the community. It is very well maintained and unobtrusive. The activities at Little Eden are respectful of their neighbors and in keeping with the tranquil and relaxed atmosphere of Portage Lake and Portage Point. Their business model must be excellent as they have thrived as a vacation destination for over 70 years. Further, it appears that they have met and perhaps exceeded all standards required to amend their Special Use Permit. I strongly recommend that they be granted their request.

---John Hopkins: I'm just concerned about the kids and pedestrians.

---Steve Nussbaum: I'm president of the board of Little Eden Camp. The dilemma is trying to accommodate families. Little Eden is a special place for those who get it.

---Doug Kaufman: I've been coming to Little Eden for 50 years. It has been a pleasure to experience the hospitality of this area.

COMMENTS OPPOSED:

---Pat Balmer: I have a house next to the proposed gymnasium- right off of my deck. I'm opposed.

---Dency Lippert: Regarding the storage building. Consider the residents who moved into the woods. Now, it is noisy. Can you shelter the area and aim the lighting down?

---Roz Jaffe: I'm opposed to Phase III. Ravinia Drive is the way to access the area. I'm concerned about the township road, property values and the quality of life. I'm also opposed to the proposed gymnasium, which is on the border of my property, mere feet from my bedroom.

---Laurel Voran: I have two safety concerns: Increased pedestrian traffic across Portage Point Drive, and an increase in pedestrian traffic of all ages, and access to a new parking lot down by the lake. Another concern is about another large storage being built on Woodland Drive, across from my house. (Other comments are contained in her letter).

(NOTE: All the letters in their entirety are attached to the original document of these minutes).

ADJOURN: Hearing adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Five minute recess taken at 7:20 p.m.

Regular meeting opened at 7:25 p.m.

Chairman Trout introduced Developer Robert Gezon/Windfalls Landing, LLC, developer of Portage Point Inn, and his wife, Melissa.

MINUTES: Motion by Blackmore, second by Taylor to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2017 meeting. Motion carried.

Motion by Blackmore, second by Cody to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2017 Special Meeting with the following correction: correct spelling of "Gezan" to "Gezon". Motion carried.

ACTION ON APPLICATION FROM LITTLE EDEN CAMP'S REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT TO SPECIAL USE PERMIT:

Cody: There are three things to address: traffic control, dark sky lighting and screening, and location of the gymnasium.

Taylor: We need more analysis of the parking lot.

Trout asked Architect Meekhof if the tennis court and gym could be swapped out. Meekhof said they would like to keep it central to the camp, we'll look at it and discuss it.

Philpot asked for corrections on the Narrative, second paragraph. Change Article 43 to 42; Resort Residential from RR-4 to RR-3; and Section 4303 to 4203B.

Motion by Phillips, second by Hunt to table the Little Eden Site Plan and request more research. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS OTHER THAN TOPICS RELATED TO PUBLIC HEARING:

Comments received from Township Supervisor David Meister who suggested consideration of placement of a "pull" buoy in the channel to better direct boat traffic around the Inn and Yacht Club area. Gezon said he's done this before and it is a good idea. If we (Gezon) place it, we would place it in the centerline of the channel. The Coast Guard might put the buoy(s) in and maintain them. We'd apply for a Hazard to Navigation request.

Mike Acton and Peg Acton spoke in favor of the Inn project.

Trout read 11 letters plus another letter with 14 signatories to that letter, all from residents in support of the project.

--- Letters were received from: Betty Cozzie: the plans and future improvements are being done to benefit the survival of this lake and the town of Onekama. Why would anyone want to stop the progress of bringing this wonderful resort back to what it was; Ronald and Carol Dooley: we have watched Portage Point Inn slowly sink into an abyss, only to happily observe that the Gezon family has stepped up to resurrect it. Their business plan is sound and will bring economic prosperity to a property that easily could become an economic blight; Tad and Sue Duemler: in my estimation he (Gezon) is doing everything he can to respect concerns of CCPL and will do everything possible to make his project safe for those who use the water, marina and surrounding area. It is absolutely critical to the sustenance of our community to have a successful Portage Point Inn; Ron and Tina Hall: We have yet to hear what the opposition would do with the Inn to make it viable. We feel strongly that Mr. Gezon's solution may be the Inn's last chance; Joanne Holton: The alternative of having the place (Inn) go into disrepair would be awful. Someone is willing to invest in our area, and I believe, make it better;

---Mike Holton: if CCPL had existed prior to the most recent purchase of the Inn and had a history, through their actions, of working on issues as reflected in their classification as a non-profit (environment, water, water resources, wetlands conservation and management), then they would have more credibility. At some point, we need to recognize some things are needed for Portage Point Inn to have a decent chance of being successful. I have not heard anything that makes me think that those involved with the purchase and development of Portage Point Inn are approaching things in an irresponsible manner or without regard for the community; Jim Moody & Susan Osmus: we support the Planning Commission's efforts to issue an SUP to Portage Point Inn. Any opposition standing in your way is by a few self-serving residents; Libby (Matthews) Schleiffarth: For over 100 years the PPI has been a source of tourism, providing summer and permanent jobs, and has been a focal point and a point of pride, standing on the west side of the lake. The SUP would allow the Inn to continue to be all of those things for another century;

---Walter & Carol Tamulis: We support the revitalization of the Inn--the hotel, marina and sewerage system. The owner/manager's primary business is improving waterways through the Corps of Engineers and other entities. He knows what he is doing; Dan and Wendy Thomas: We support the SUP and are against the complaint of the CCPL; Rosele & Everett Zack: We have had a home here since 1994. We believe the current owner (of the Inn) has a sound business plan that has a substantial chance at success;

Jay & Linda Siwek: we, too are Concerned Citizens, of both Onekama and Portage Lake, but not in the same way as CCPL : we are concerned about the threat to development and success of the PPI, essential to development and success of our town and community, we are concerned about the threat to this historic landmark. We think the boat barn would be an enhanced addition to the neighborhood. And, unlike some members of the CCPL, the boat barn *is* our neighborhood. We pass by the site every time we go on or off the Point, up to the Inn, Yacht Club or Langland Park, or bike or walk in North Point Park. We are concerned that a small group of naysayers will be disproportionately represented by voicing objections to the special use permit, and want to emphasize our support, as well as the support of the 26 property owners and, co-signers of the letter from last year's summer meeting.

Trout said there were no letters received in opposition.

(NOTE: All the letters in their entirety are attached to the original document of these minutes).

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD: For over fifteen (15) months, the Onekama Twp. Planning Commission has been gathering facts and opinions on all aspects of the proposed amendment to the existing Special Use Permit or the Portage Point Inn. Opinions have been sought and expressed at a Public Hearing devoted entirely to the subject (July 7, 2016) and at numerous public meetings of the Planning Commission.

While opinions are considered carefully, the Planning Commission also sought FACT BASED opinions on possible impacts to the community by hiring certified and nationally recognized Experts in Marina construction and related environmental issues: Traffic studies-including traffic patterns and community impact, parking lot configurations, and roadways; and an overall analysis of the entire project proposal from a certified and recognized expert in Planning/Zoning who has been the head of the Planning Office of the City of Grand Rapids for over twelve (12) years.

These experts spent almost six months- not days- studying the amended use proposal to determine impacts to both the environment and recreation on Portage Lake; effects on roadways, pedestrian traffic, road and parking patterns; and in examining all aspects of the proposal from the view of a City Planner, including reviewing preferences expressed by citizens in formulating the community Master Plan and similar documents. Also reviewed were materials submitted by opponents of the amended use to the existing Special Use Permit.

We thank all for the input we have received. By law, Planning Commission members are charged with making decisions NOT based on who is the loudest or most emotional in advocating a position. This is not a process of plebiscite, but a process of evaluating the pertinent facts and best held expert opinions to reach a decision, and that responsibility is exactly what the Planning Commission shall fulfill. Jim Trout.

Gezon presented the site plan. Trout said the planners took parking spots from the south end of the building. The southernmost parking lot must be pervious. They looked at the green belt; are concerned with the parking lot. Also looked at the proposed gazebo and outdoor seating area, where Gezon can also have a deck.

On the architectural rendering of the boathouse, Trout said it should reflect the character of the Inn. Landscaping is very important, especially on Seymour. We want a bigger berm and a green screen. In front of the barn, he will have the doll houses match the Inn colors, with a six foot berm on the west and south sides of the building, and a drainage swale with landscaping. They will save as many trees as possible. The retail component will not be at the barn.

Gezon: We won't berm where the six required parking spots are on Seymour.

Taylor: How do you control boats for parking with valet parking spots?

Gezon: I have a spot in the barn designated for boats that may require more than seasonal space. Parking then would be available in the seasonal boat space. When these boats are gone, I will remove the trailers and park the overflow cars there.

Gezon: Equipment for hydro-blasting would be inside the barn, boat blasted and the equipment is put away. The boat owners are restricted to doing work on a boat, such as only using a brush and roller. They are not allowed to handle any hazardous substances. This would be done only by my trained and certified employees. The building will be heavily sprinkled and will have a generator.

Taylor: When will the streets be vacated?

Gezon: Upon approval of the site plan.

Taylor: I would like to have an annual review of work progress until it is done.

Gezon: I would be happy to have a review.

Taylor: I would like the zoning administrator to have copies of all the permits.

Gezon: That is no problem.

Signage and lights were discussed.

Motion by Cody, second by Phillips that the planning commission accept the June 15, 2017 revised site plan for the amended Special Use Permit sought by Windfalls Landings, LLC for future operations at the Portage Point Inn Waterfront Resort Complex. The revised site plan has non-substantive changes to the earlier, initial site plan reviewed and approved by the Onkama Township Planning Commission in 2016, revisions which include alterations in parking lot traffic patterns, clear depiction of required greenbelt screening, landscaping as recommended by contracted experts in the areas of Marina Design, Traffic Analysis and Overall Planning and Zoning Best Practices. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Comments received from Judith Spohn.

ADJOURN: 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by
Mary Lou Millard,
Recording Secretary

Jim Trout, Chairman

Tom Volkema, Secretary (Absent)
Jon Phillips, Acting Secretary