

TOWN of MAY
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
November 29, 2022

The Board of Supervisors of the Town of May continued a special meeting on Tuesday, November 29, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. the Town Hall. Those present included: Board members John Adams, John Pazlar, and Steve Magner; Clerk/Treasurer Bobbi Hummel; Planner, Nate Sparks, Attorney Dave Snyder, Planning Commission Member Walt Peterson.

This meeting was continued from the November 22, 2022 meeting. The time and date of this meeting was decided at a previous meeting; therefore notice/posting was not necessary.

The sole purpose of this workshop is to discuss ordinance and comprehensive plan amendments within the conservancy district.

Board Chair John Adams reconvinced the meeting at 1:05 p.m.

Mary Johnson and Mary Lou Nelson. Would like to present an official grievance at this time. There was not an environment impact done on the school and the surrounding area, statistics are presented to the Board. Also, she would like to officially submit a complaint to May Township. They feel, as Catholics, their religion and civil rights are not being protected. Bias has been on both sides of the issue. She received an email as an example and that there was not an environmental study done on the school.

Kathy Getto is in agreement with Mary Johnson and Mary Lou Nelson. Her concern is that the township is not opening the land up to a camp, as it was originally used for. Reference is made to a boy scout camp as comparison. Kathy feels it is prejudice that the township is not moving outside of the demographic to welcome other people.

John Adams clarifies that this is not the purpose of this meeting. The goal is simply to update the comprehensive plan and ordinances. It is not, and the Board has not addressed any issues regarding religion of any kind. Religion has not entered into this process and as long as he is on the Board it will not enter into this process. It does not have a place here. The sale is between private parties.

Charlie Anderson. Marine on St. Croix. A previous River Grove parent. He is on the Marine City Council, but it here as a private citizen only. This community has dealt with hardships regarding schools. Warnings were provided to River Grove about the possibility of its current situation. The question is not if the sale will go through or if a youth camp will open, but rather whether May Township will maintain control over the land use or concede that control as a result of an ill-advised attempt to block the use entirely. In short, due to a precedence, an existing conditional use permit, law, and federal zoning exemptions May Township should and will lose in court if they try to block the use. These are clearly targeted, anti-CYP changes in the conservancy district. The strategic argument by River Grove officials, PTA, and some residents is that the CYP is part of a dangerous religious group that will send dangerous kids to the area and desecrate the

land. Talking points on the River Grove website are false, including pointing the finger at Wilder. The tactic is interesting, but probably not effective. Wilder has been addiment that the River Grove's lease will not be renewed. Mr. Anderson's children have been to catholic youth camps, similar to what is being proposed on the Wilder Property. There have been no jet skis, no huge inflatables, no zip lines, no masses of children, and no large bonfires. His children have experienced peace, tranquility, introspection, friendship, appreciation for creation and worship of their Creator. Time was spent integrating with and understanding their place in the natural world, nurturing the whole person, growing in virtue, and understanding their God given dignity. Words matter, right now the passionate words by River Grove leadership and other are loaded with mis-information. It undermines the goals and well-being of their students. Passion does not correlate to reason and this decision should not be made due to the perceived level of passion by anyone. When passion drives choices it often results in regret. The easy thing for the Board to do is win in public opinion, but it won't bring you victory in a court of law. The harder, but right thing to do is to make a prudent decision to work with CYP on reasonable controls to avoid and inevitable legal defeat if Wilder and CYP are forced to choose that option due to the targeted changes being proposed.

Pat Regan, Minnesota Catholic Youth Partnership Board. Mr. Regan would like to defuse some of the tone of the proceedings. CYP comes with no malice. They love the mission and the children of River Grove, as they are children of our Creator. They are children of God. If music and singing is heard at the camp, be assured it will only be in praise to the Creator of all the beauty. He invites us all to put down our dukes. CYP has offered the school the option of a 1-year extension to the lease should CYP acquire the property. This would be for the 2023-24 school year in its current location. It gives the people of May Township, River Grove school, and Manitou Fund time to activate a plan to relocate the school for the 2024-2025 school year. We all need to work together. *(It is Advent and Mr. Regan recites a poem by Thomas Merton "Advent")*. Thomas Merton also said "A man who fails well is greater than one who succeeds badly". Peace to May Township, peace to everyone here. Lets come to a solution that works for all of us. Merry Christmas to everyone.

Tim Healy, Minnesota Catholic Youth Partnership. Mr. Healy would like to address some of the issues that have come up, specifically misleading and false statements over the past two months. A letter about CYP's mission, vision, and FAQ was distributed to neighbors and lakeshore owners. They are trying to do a better job of getting their message out. Campers on site will be similar in numbers to the school, right around 60,000 people days – that is at maximum capacity and it will take years to get to that many. There will weeks and months that will have little to no use. 2nd-4th weeks in November, all of December, and the first couple weeks of January is not the time for retreats. May is slow also. There are only about 22 weekends during the school year that work for weekend retreats. Traffic will be less than current use as students will be arriving on busses, in groups of 30-50 at a time. They will come in one day and leave 2-5 days later. The map (presented) shows the 600 acres of Wilder Forest, the camp will reside on about 70 acres. That is about 12%-13% of the property. The rest of the acreage will not be used. Kids will not be wondering aimlessly around the property. The kids are very much monitored and kept track of. The remaining acres will be protected and left undisturbed. CYP will install a new, state of the art septic system. They are trying to listen and adapt to concerns about Square Lake. They value the pristine nature of Wilder and feel it is an asset for them and for their message. The goal is to

integrate the message with the land. Activities will not be dangerous or destructive as some of the messaging states. They have seen the powerful impact a retreat/camp can have on youth. It impacts lives in a positive way. They want to promote virtue and character; it is something that the world needs now more than ever. They are a church camp trying to spread the gospel and encourage kids to make more positive decisions. (*Scripture from John 10:10 read aloud*)

Attorney Brian Bell, Manitou Fund. Notes that comments in past and current meetings are almost more in line with this being a CUP permit. This is only about the future of the conservancy district, which is to conserve natural resources. Is a youth camp consistent with uses in a conservancy district? An overnight youth camp has a greater environmental impact than a school or other uses that are permitted. Overnight stays in a conservancy district create more showers which has a direct impact on ground water. It is within this Boards legislative purview to decide to enact policies that advance environmental preservation and conservation. Earlier emailed communications regarding violations of notice requirements is not the case as this issue was heard at a public hearing before the Planning Commission, recommendations were made, and the Board is only acting on that recommendation.

Tom Bray, Taft Law Firm, Wilder Foundation. The Boards authority is very limited. The Board has three choices today. One, adopt the amendments as the Planning Commission recommended. Second, elect to take no action. Third, initiate your own amendments. But if you initiate your own amendments you are required by state law to refer the new amendments back to the Planning Commission for consideration. He states the Board is not entitled to make amendments of their own initiation today.

Mark Giesner, resident, Square Lake. There is rhetoric about the owner of the property, but it is irrelevant. The Board has been working on a comprehensive plan for over a year. Well before any purchase agreement was in place. There is no bias or malice. The Board has an obligation to update the plan so there are guidelines to treat everybody fairly. Stay the course, get the comprehensive plan in place and as situations come up the Board can deal with them based on the guidelines.

The purpose of this meeting is to approve the final of language in this latest draft. The goal today is to approve the last version on zoning ordinances and compressive plan amendments in the conservancy district. Much of the conversation today will belong in a CUP application discussion and process.

No further comments from Planner Nate Sparks at this time.


Attorney David Snyder refers the Board to his letter dated November 21st, 2022.

Chair John Adams makes a motion to approve the ordinance dated November 29th, 2022. Ordinance 2022-03, amending the Town code regarding the uses and performance standards in the conservancy district. The motion is seconded by Supervisor Pazlar. By Roll Call Vote: Adams: YES, Pazlar: YES, Magner: NO. Motion Passes.


Chair John Adams makes a motion approve the resolution dated November 29th, 2022. Resolution 2022-21, amending the Town comprehensive plan related to a review of the conservancy designation and transportation plan. The motion is seconded by Supervisor Pazlar. By Roll Call Vote: Adams: YES, Pazlar: YES, Magner: NO. Motion Passes.

The meeting adjourned at 1:38.

Submitted:


Bobbi Hummel
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved:


John Adams
Board Chair