

Good news for developer; Neighbors not so neighborly

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At last month's Clifton Town Board meeting, developer Rich Ahern first approached the board with a proposal aimed at increasing the number of Planned Residential Homes (PRD) built in the town.

At the March 4 Town Board meeting Ahern, accompanied by Engineer Lou Filkins of Odgen Engineering and property owner Greg Most, N6752 County Road F of Prescott, came before the board for a second time. Most, the current owner of the property under consideration together with Ahern and Filkins brought the board a revised proposal for the larger subdivision that runs south of the Clifton Hollow Golf Course along County Road F.

The original proposal called for 80 lots with a three-acre minimum and community well and septic. Under the current zoning ordinance only 50 homes could be built rather than the proposed 80 homes.

That would mean a call for a change in the current zoning law. The new proposal calls for 51 lots on approximately 255-acres which is a density of five acres per lot. The new proposal is in line with the current zoning ordinance.

Board Supervisor Gregg Eggers expressed some concern over runoff of the lots by the fifth fairway of the golf course.

Filkins said, "The plan will occur in stages," and his concerns would be taken into consideration as the plan moves forward.

The board approved the proposal and according to

Ahern the next step is to bring it to the county for approval.

The board heard public comments from resident Richard Sanders, N753 County Road QQ, Prescott, with regard to an ongoing dispute with neighbor, Luann Skilling, 754th Ave., Prescott, due to a recurring "nuisance" brought on by alleged dog barking.

The dispute stems from an earlier complaint by neighbors against dog owner Skilling for noncompliance with the local kennel ordinance. Skilling originally had 12 dogs and could not obtain the required kennel license for that number of animals. As a result, she was instructed by the Town Board to reduce the number of dogs to five in order to be in compliance.

While Skilling indicates, they are making every attempt to adopt out her sled dogs, she contends "They have to go to good homes and that is difficult and it takes time."

According to Skilling, "The dogs are considered draft dogs in addition to being a part of her tribal heritage."

Even though she is working with the Town Board to reduce the number of dogs, she believes the dogs are not barking and are not creating a nuisance. Skilling indicated to the board that Deputy Sheriff Jean Spetzler has been to the property on numerous occasions at various times of the day and has not witnessed any dog barking and does not believe the animals to be a nuisance.

Local resident and neighbor Richard Sanders contends that the nine remaining dogs "are howling and yowling every day."

In a letter dated March 3 to the Town Board, Sanders writes, "Let me be blunt. I am a large taxpayer in Clifton Township, as is Jerry Filkins, as is my neighbor Randy Iten. As is Leroy Peterson. Mr. Skillings is not! He rents an old farm house from an absentee owner. It's not much of a push to come to the conclusion that Mr. Skillings, who owns no land here and pays no taxes here, should be brought into compliance with county and township laws, immediately. He has continually violated the dog (numbers) law, the licensing law and the noise ordinances from the very day he moved into the old farm house on the corner of County Road QQ and Hidden Valley Development. Why has he not been forced to do something about his obvious violations?"

The issue sparked a heated exchange between Luann Skillings and Sanders leaving Board Chair Leroy Peterson to intervene and call for "order" before hearing further discussion on the matter.

According to the Skillingses, they are doing everything in their power to reduce the number of dogs to five however they believe it will take some time. Luann Skillings indicated that they feel neighbors are now harassing them over the dogs and asked the board to put a stop to the alleged harassment by neighbors.

While Eggers indicated the board has no control over that he believes if the Skillingses continue to seek suitable homes for the remaining four dogs and work to keep the dogs quiet, the problem should resolve itself.