



**Village of River Hills**  
7650 N Pheasant Ln  
River Hills, WI 53217

Village Hall: 352-8213  
Public Works: 352-0080  
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## **PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES**

### **Monday, December 9, 2020 @ 4:00 pm**

**This meeting was a virtual meeting through Zoom – Meeting code 876-1687-1531 Passcode 710209**

#### **1. Roll Call.**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. The following members were present: Chairman & Village President Steve Anderson, Peter Stanford, Jeffrey Costakos, Bernie Cohen, Michael Weiss, Don Daugherty, Trustee Willard Walker, and Village Engineer Mustafa Emir. Absent and excused: Charles Stewart. Also present: Village Attorney Bill Dineen, Bob Boucher, Peter Thornquist, Alan Marcuvitz, Carolyn Esswein, Village Manager Tammy LaBorde, and Village Deputy Clerk Stephanie Waala.

#### **2. Approval of minutes from November 9, 2020**

Motion by Weiss and seconded by Costakos to approve the November 9, 2020 minutes; motion carried unanimously.

#### **3. Continue Discussion Regarding Consideration and review of requests regarding the former Eder Farm property, five parcels located on the north side of Brown Deer Road running north to West Green Brook Road totaling 53.4 acres:**

President Anderson reminded everyone that this is not a public hearing. He stated there are two concepts to discuss.

##### **a. Committee on the Environment's Request to create a Park as referred to the Plan Commission by the Village Board**

Peter Thornquist, Bob Boucher, Wendy Walcott, and Jim Uhrinak spoke on this issue. Mr. Thornquist presented updated slides of the proposed conservancy. They wish to return the land to the forest it once was and are referring to the land as the Fish Creek Reserve. Thornquist stated that the parcel has obvious wetlands and underground streams which are funneled into Fish Creek and empty into Lake Michigan. The Eder Farm is the headwaters of Fish Creek.

Mr. Uhrinak is the head of the Conservation Committee of the Milwaukee Audubon Society. He presented information regarding restoration areas in the Chicagoland area and stated that it is possible in River Hills. He said the Eder Farm could become a destination that could put Lynden Sculpture Garden on the map. It could build a sense of place and build a value of place. Great opportunity to have a forest reserve incorporated with the Lynden Sculpture Garden. He said there are sources of funding to get this done - coastal management monies are available, the Great Lakes compact, the Knowles- Nelson grant, and

the Milwaukee Audubon has an interest in this plan working. In addition, he said there are private donors, state dollars and federal dollars, and linkage with other properties. He presented several photos. He stated there could be a proper young forest created within ten years.

Wendy Walcott – the COE is proposing an alternative plan but they need time to find funding. The Board has invested public funds for a development – that she said will destroy most of the headwaters and may also be unpopular with the Village residents. The COE requests that the funding be similarly allocated for a natural area and the money would pay for professionals. They should have access to the findings which have been completed so far. The concept plan – funding, management of public access, fencing is important (there are grants available), parking, trails, cooperation with neighbors and residents, and development of some housing on the outer edges of the parcel. They are looking to provide a future for green space.

Bob Boucher – he looked at the budget that showed \$175,000 for expenses, can the Village share as to how the funds have been allocated. President Anderson stated it is a host of items.

Plan Commission member Cohen asked about unlimited access by anyone from the area – is this going to be private or public – how big is the parking lot, will there be controlled restrictions to non-residents, will there be picnic tables, he loves the idea of the green space. Walcott responded that this is why a study needs to be done in order to address these issues. The proposed fencing was to keep deer out.

#### **b. Planned Single Family Condominium Development**

President Anderson introduced Carolyn Esswein who has helped put together a plan for the TID. She presented an updated slide show. Many residents have expressed that if they need to downsize what options would be available. She looked at limiting access of Brown Deer Road and presented 90-units last time. She looked at preserving a portion of the site and is proposing to use the existing tree line as a division of the property. It would preserve the east side (30%) of the property, the west side would be available for development with significant buffers.

She presented a concept plan that reduced the number of units – 72 with an amenity (pond) in the middle. There would be one access point off Brown Deer Road and one community building with a significant buffer along Green Brook Road. 50 of the units are 2,000 square foot units and 22 are 2,500 square foot units. all with 2 car garages. This revised concept plan showed that 75% of the entire area would be open space.

Plan Commission member Costakos had several questions – what is the estimated cost of doing this development, is there a financial analysis as to payback time period, what is projected cost of the houses? Anderson stated the 72 units would average \$486,000 in value and several million in infrastructure. The assessment on the property would be \$35 to \$38 million when completed with the buildout taking 5 years. The tax would be approximately \$900,000 per year to be used for debt service. Approximately \$225,000 would go to River Hills, or 8.8%

of what our property tax is today. We have used Ehlers & Associates and there are more details that can be provided. The intent is to repay the TID by 2032.

Anderson has concerns with the things that can happen that you don't plan for. River Hills does not have an excess of funds; it is quite the opposite. There are cell tower leases that bring in revenue however River Hills will lose \$60k next year and the leases that provide steady income are in jeopardy. Wisconsin controls how much we can increase our taxes and the state makes it difficult to continue to provide service levels that residents have enjoyed. The Village has 22 employees and in order to maintain quality of life in River Hills, we need to be able to increase the tax levy.

This is a very important decision as to how to use the property. We are all serious about getting the best use of this land.

Cohen stated there seems to be a large flow from the burbs to the downtown condos and they still seem to be selling. What analysis has been done to look at the absorption rate? Anderson stated that in major cities, the burbs are the hottest for sales and this seems to be happening in a lot of cities. He knows of people who are looking to downsize in the next five years. Carolyn noted that the growing demographic is 55 and older. Cohen asked if this could be a 55 and older what would draw them to River Hills. Anderson stated that River Hills is only 15 minutes from downtown.

Plan Commission member Weiss stated that a market study has not yet been done. What we are looking at is more of a concept study. The Plan Commission should look to see if we like the concept. Developers that the Village would talk to would help figure out the balance for units.

Plan Commission member Daugherty asked if anyone could compare and contrast this proposal with the Mandel development. Anderson stated that the Mandel proposal took four years to evolve. It started out at 500+ apartments in a three-story building and was all rental units. Density was 8 units per acre and this proposal is at 1.34 units per acre. Height was also a previous concern; these are one-story versus Mandel's.

Larry Boyer stated that development on the west side would take away any component of the conservation aspect as well as zoning would need to be changed.

Costakos asked if we have heard from residents on the revised proposal. Anderson stated no this is the first viewing. Costakos asked if Bob or Wendy could comment on a budget. Boucher said they would need to have a consultant assist with determining the budget. Boucher stated that they haven't looked into it. Some of the \$175,000 could be used to come up with the figures. Until they have some numbers and a plan it is difficult to tell what the cost will be. Anderson stated that the Village Engineer is working on getting estimates for infrastructure.

Weiss asked Bob Boucher & Peter Thornquist if they are interested in a hybrid situation like this or some variation of this – or is it all or nothing. Walcott stated that you have to know what you are looking at. The one-third conservation is in the area zoned for 2-acre

lots. The water from the west will be coming to the east salt filled, which will result in a faster flow. You might be limited to cedar and birch trees. She questions if people will spend money on this type of condo. Who will pay and manage this consortium – she isn't sure if anyone would be interested. Anderson noted that the Village can propose new zoning. Thornquist asked what would happen if they found a donor to pay for the parcel; developing four homes along Green Brook Road could help to offset the cost. The COE is happy to work with what they have and thinks they have great potential for the whole parcel. Boucher stated if the Village wants development you could put 4 or 5 lots along Green Brook Road and could eliminate the need to bring in infrastructure. The water supply could handle this number of properties.

Weiss asked if this is too small to be of ecological value. Uhrniak stated that the high-profile places are much larger and always want to see a 40-acre block minimum. This land also has an effect on the bird population.

Boyer stated that the use of the farm tilled the top of the soil and they have the ability to take land minimally disturbed and bring it back to the past.

Lori Kahn – 1900 W. Green Brook Rd. – a lot of her neighbors are not on the call today. Concerned with 72 condo units even with a buffer. What happens to the value of their homes. The conservation plan is more forward thinking. How long would the homes be under construction.

Cohen asked if this were to go conservation or hybrid model, would all of the construction materials come in strictly off of Brown Deer Rd. The intent of the plan would be to come off of Brown Deer Rd. Weiss stated that the only issue to come off Green Brook would be water.

Weiss asked Bob Boucher if its conservation – who owns the land, who has the financial responsibility. Boucher stated it depends – if the land is a public asset it would be the Village and depends on how much needs to be maintained. President Jan Marsh is the president of the Milwaukee Audubon and she might be able to answer if they are interested in this parcel. Anderson asked how much time would be needed to answer the questions. Uhrniak stated that they could put something together over a 60 to 90-day period. Weiss asked what level of funding would be needed. Uhrniak stated it depends on what you want. Weiss stated that hourly amounts have been spent so far regarding the project. How much would the cost be - \$10,000 or \$15,000.

Walcott needs to see what has been done so far. Anderson asked if it would be worth proceeding with the land split being shown. Walcott said that she would rather invest her time in a less compromised situation. She needs to find out what needs to be done and who would fund it. Uhrniak stated the Audubon would only be interested in a 53-acre reserve.

Mustafa noted that there have been borings done to 20 feet at up to 15 locations. They have performed the wetland delineation and created a topographic map of the property.

***PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES – December 7, 2020***

Weiss thought there should be conversations over the holidays. The Village could share all of the information we have with anyone who is interested and then schedule another meeting in January.

Anderson stated that after the meeting of the Village Board in mid-January we could have a Plan Commission meeting.

**4. Schedule Next meeting date** – No date was set.

**5. Adjourn**

Motion by Daugherty and seconded by Weiss to adjourn meeting at 5:47 p.m.; motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by Tammy LaBorde, Clerk and Stephanie Waala, Deputy Clerk, on December 21, 2020.