

CITY OF COUNTRYSIDE

*803 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525
www.countryside-il.org*



Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Plan Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

7:15 P.M.

City Hall

Board Members

**Chairman Robert Schwarz, Secretary Tina Grotzke,
Bryan White, Marco Gutierrez, Ronald Ward, Steve Kehr,
Tom Geraghty, Danielle Edenfield, Jonathan Gertsmeier**

Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chairman Schwarz.

Roll Call: Secretary Grotzke called the Roll of Members physically present:
Present: Chairman Robert Schwarz, Steve Kehr, Tina Grotzke, Tom Geraghty, Ronald Ward
Marco Gutierrez, Danielle Edenfield, Bryan White
Absent: Jonathan Gertsmeier
Also Present: City Attorney Erik Peck, Planning Manager Richard Trent

Approval of Minutes -- The Regular Meeting Minutes of July 2, 2024 were previously distributed to Board Members. There were no corrections; motion made to approve the minutes as presented.

A motion was made by Mr. Ward, seconded by Mr. White, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, White, Edenfield
Nay: 0
Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman's Comments -- None

Action Items:

- 1. CASE #PSU24-0003: Consideration of a Special Use**
 - a. To consider granting a Special Use to permit a horse boarding and riding school (Johnson Equestrian Center) in the R-7 Zoning District at the subject property of 10101 5th Avenue Cutoff.**

Mr. Gutierrez moved to open the Public Hearing in this matter, seconded by Ms. Grotzke and carried by unanimous voice vote. PM Mr. Trent presented the Staff report. The Community Development Department has received the required Proof of Notice.

Mr. Trent stated that the Applicants, David and Cindy Johnson, a/k/a Johnson Equestrian Center, are seeking a Special Use request for their property, approximately 13.37 acres in size – formerly known as the Stanley Luke Farms – in the R-7, Rural Residential Zoning District. The Kennedys, former owners of the subject property, operated the facility for over 50 years; the property was sold last year with the intent to continue the operation – with changes in three (3) locations, which will be discussed this evening. Aerial views of the property were presented.

Attachment C, a copy of the Land Title Survey was presented that depicted the three (3) locations on the property: the first area shaded in “green” – depicts one (1) container for delivery and storage of hay used daily to feed the horses. The second area shaded in “purple” – depicts a shaving shed used for bedding of the horse stalls. The third are shaded in “orange” – depicts two (2) containers used for the storage of farm and maintenance equipment.

The “green” area (hay trailer) is approximately 10’ x 53’ (530 sq. ft.); it should be setback a minimum of thirty feet (30’) from its present position or possibly be re-located elsewhere on the property; there

appears to be sufficient storage in the rear. The “purple” area (shaving shed) used for bedding stalls – the staff report includes these photos. The “orange” area shows two (2) containers in the rear with a roof between them creating another storage structure – approximately 600 sq. ft. – used for equipment storage – the containers should be setback a minimum of fifteen feet (15’) from the rear property line.

The hours of operation would be Sunday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. They have eight (8) employees; parking appears to be adequate on the property. Staff recommends approval of a Special Use subject to the nine (9) conditions as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated August 6, 2024.

Ms. Edenfield questioned the location of the hay trailer; Ms. Johnson stated that all three (3) containers were in the same locations with the previous owners. Any trailer could be moved around but there are low-hanging electrical lines throughout the property. Questions for Staff – Mr. Gutierrez asked about the distance from the property line (front) – solely based on the photos, the distance from the front property line appears to be approximately 10’ - 15’; it should be a minimum of thirty feet (30’) away or in another location.

David Johnson and Cindy Johnson were sworn in by Chairman Schwartz. Mr. Johnson reiterated his wife’s words; they are maintaining the trailer in the same fashion as the Kennedys. They are more than happy to move it 30’ from the front property line. Discussion ensued re: the hay operation -- a new trailer is brought in with fresh hay and the old trailer is carted off site. They will insure that both spots will be adequately setback from the front and rear property lines. Chairman Schwarz pointed out the nine (9) conditions recommended by Staff and read all nine (9) conditions aloud; the Johnsons agreed to all terms and conditions. Discussion ensued re: installing a fence around the refuse container per Item #3. Chairman Schwarz received the Petition for Special Use into Evidence as Exhibit A, and the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated August 6, 2024 as Exhibit B. Mr. Geraghty moved to close the evidentiary portion of the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez and carried by unanimous voice vote. There were no comments from Interested Parties.

Mr. White moved to approve a Special Use to permit a horse boarding and riding school (Johnson Equestrian Center) on the property commonly known as 10101 5th Avenue Cutoff subject to the nine (9) conditions, with Condition #1 being amended to permit the use of one (1) trailer setback at least thirty feet (30’) from the front property line and that the two (2) storage containers be setback at least fifteen feet (15’) from the rear property line, seconded by Ms. Grotzke and carried by unanimous Roll Call vote.

A motion was made by Mr. White, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, White, Edenfield
Nay: 0
Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman Schwarz stated that this matter will come before the City Council at its Regular Meeting on August 14, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

2. CASE #PSU24-0004: Consideration of a Special Use

- a. **To consider granting a Special Use to permit a contractor office and shop Meade Electric) in the B-3 Zoning District at the subject property of 6260 Joliet Road.**

3. CASE #PZV24-0002: Consideration of a Variance

- a. **To consider granting a Variance to waive the requirement for contractor offices and shops that all storage of material, equipment along with all trailers will be stored entirely within a building or storage container;**
- b. **To consider granting a Variance to waive the requirement that all commercial or public open off-street parking areas shall be improved with either six inches (6") of portland cement concrete or one and one-half inches asphalt binder course with a one and one-half inch asphalt top coat, both over a compacted aggregate base, not less than eight inches (8") thick; and**
- c. **To consider granting a Variance to waive the requirements of perimeter parking lot landscaping that includes the minimum 5' wide landscape area around that part of the perimeter of all parking lots which abut another parcel or right of way and concrete curbs around the perimeter at the subject property of 6260 Joliet Road.**

Ms. Edenfield moved to open the Public Hearing in this matter, seconded by Mr. White and carried by unanimous voice vote. The Community Development Department has received the required Proof of Notice. Mr. Trent presented the Staff Report: The Applicant, Cheryl Nelson, property owner, on behalf of Meade Electric, requests a Special Use to permit a contractor's office on the property. In addition, the first Variance seeks to allow the storage of materials outdoors, rather than inside a building or container; the second Variance requests a waiver of installing a hard surface in the parking area; and the third Variance requests waiver of parking lot landscaping and concrete curbs.

The property is located just east of Sunbelt Rentals on the south side of Joliet Road. The request is to use the eastern portion of the subject property; the western portion received a Special Use in 2005 (for Sunbelt Rentals); this property has come before the PC/ZBA in the past. The eastern portion is approximately 2.43 acres in size. Items too numerous to mention are stored out there; the area is divided into zones – "A" through "H" – please see the photos included in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated August 6, 2024.

Mr. Trent stated that in the past the area was used for storage of vehicles by a local car dealership. That arrangement ended and suddenly new material from Meade Electric started to become visible in mass quantities on the site. Staff reached out to the property owner and advised them of their options. They are before the PC/ZBA to request a Special Use and three (3) Variances. Heavy equipment is being stored on site – such as transformers, spools of wires/cables; pipes and other materials being utilized for

various projects related to Meade Electric work being conducted in the immediate area and with the I-294 Reconstruction Project. Staff recommends approval of the contractor's office and shop (Meade Electric) subject to the eleven (11) conditions as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated August 6, 2024. Regarding the three (3) Variances, Staff leaves the matter up to the PC/ZBA's discretion; if approval is recommended, Staff offers six (6) conditions for consideration (for each of the Variances) as noted in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated August 6, 2024.

Mr. Gutierrez asked about the serious violation mentioned. Mr. Trent stated there appears to be either a "squatter" or a sub-letter present on site – a gentleman operating a junk business out of a van on the premises; junk was stored outside the van; this was not part of the proposal this evening. The "junk business" should be gone. How visible is all this from Joliet Road. Mr. Trent stated there is an existing 6' chain link fence (with white slats) on the north running half way through the property – just to the east of Sunbelt Rentals. The tall items should be rearranged; shorter items moved up front, taller items placed in the rear, to make sure there is no visibility from the road. Heavy equipment that is visible is stored up front. There is no residential property in the immediate area; forest preserve, commercial businesses and condominiums (apartment buildings) surround the site. Mr. Gutierrez stated that the entire lot is gravel; they seek a complete waiver and propose no landscaping or screening; three (3) storage containers are also on site.

Ms. Grotzke noted that they moved into this site without the City's knowledge on Route 66. Mr. Geraghty asked about the length of the intended storage. Mr. Trent stated possibly two (2) years, with the possibility that projects may continue beyond that time, which is why Staff took action to involve the review and consideration of the PC/ZBA. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan recommends improvements to Joliet Road. This property is identified under the "Joliet Road Subarea Plan" – streetscape improvements are suggested; the City should encourage commercial or entertainment use; the building is aging and improvements are needed. In lieu of redevelopment now, Ms. Nelson would like to lease the property to Meade Electric for two (2) years. Staff began contact in May (with Ms. Nelson and Mr. Tomczyk); they responded quickly. Staff worked with Ms. Nelson and Mr. Tomczyk to advise them of their options, to remove all items or submit a Special Use and/or acquire Variances. At this time, there have been no complaints received from surrounding residents or businesses.

Cheryl Nelson, David Tomczyk and Joseph Holland were sworn in *en masse* by Chairman Schwarz. Ms. Nelson stated that she has owned the property since 1990 and stored overflow vehicles there from the Mitsubishi – Continental Motors Group in Countryside. They were "Grandfathered" many times; this came up and the ordinances appeared to have changed regarding parking. They were not operating a business out of the area, simply moving/storing vehicles for many, many years. With COVID, their business was devastated; they were on and off being able to store cars on the property. It was a storage lot; there was no need to improve it; she does not want to offend the City by its appearance with weeds, etc. They have always tried to remedy the situation. Meade Electric was working in the immediate area and asked to lease the property for a temporary period; since there were no vehicles being stored (on site at the time), she thought it was a good idea. She didn't mean to offend anybody or do something not in compliance with the Ordinance. They operate the same as when the vehicles were being stored

on site; now transformers and other equipment are being stored on the property. Ms. Nelson will cooperate with the City regarding the Master Plan for beautification of the area. She doesn't want to be an eyesore for the community. She is open to installing a higher fence or landscaping the area, but not particularly interested in a sidewalk that doesn't go anywhere.

Mr. Joe Holland, Director of Meade Electric, supports all the ComEd work in this service area. They also have contracts for tollway widening. His jobs are short-term, 3-4 months; tollway work will last till December 2025; they also have done other work in the vicinity of 55th Street & East Avenue in Countryside/LaGrange. Mr. Holland has 4 to 5 crews who show up every morning, move the trucks out and return at 3 p.m. – no “in and out” traffic throughout the day. They have three (3) storage containers and a temporary office trailer with one desk, used by the general foreman for about two (2) hours per day. Mr. Gutierrez would like to see plans regarding landscaping to improve the site and an ornamental iron fence or wood fence for screening. Perhaps trees every 25' and shrubs to make it more appealing along Joliet Road. Mr. Holland stated that Meade Electric would share a common road, the east driveway, with Sunbelt for ingress/egress onto Joliet Road. Mr. Gutierrez suggested a hard surfaced driveway be installed for ease of access to the storage area and to better organize the various materials. Ms. Nelson stated that if some time in the future Sunbelt would need that feature, then it would be necessary to install a driveway; pavers would be acceptable as a driveway material too. Ms. Nelson would like to investigate the matter further. Mr. Gutierrez would like to see a proposal showing the location of landscaping and hard surface; everything would be within the property line. Ms. Edenfield stated that further discussion is needed. She suggested revisiting this matter with diagrams, etc. and providing landscape ideas. Mr. Geraghty stated that those suggestions are listed in the Staff Memo; they should be presented visually.

Mr. Tomczyk stated that the land area is not flat; it is two-tiered – a top portion at the gate and a lower level to the right. Mr. Trent proposed rearranging items on the lot. Some very dense foliage exists on the east side; trucks are parked back there and cannot be seen. Other items could be rearranged; taller items can be placed behind the trees or to the rear of the property, which is lower; the site could look better, along with some proposed landscaping. Mr. Tomczyk believes that the 6' fence makes the lot safer and more attractive; you can see over the fence; that is a benefit but perhaps with bushes in front of the fence, the site could look better. He noted that the lot itself is secure.

The person (business) seen there is not a squatter; he was in another lot that was broken into and asked to move in there with his three small trucks. He was given permission to do so. He is still there; Meade Electric wanted to hear what the Board said before taking any action. Mr. Trent stated that parkway landscaping includes deciduous trees spaced every 35' coupled with bushes; Staff recommended a wood or vinyl fence should be considered for security and aesthetics. All Sunbelt equipment is stored on asphalt. If the PC/ZBA would like to see a Preliminary Landscape Plan of how landscaping improvements might look on site that is at the PC/ZBA's discretion.

Chairman Schwarz stated that the maximum temporary time would be two (2) years; after that time the property would be ready for redevelopment. These landscaping and driveway proposals are necessary

for further development. Chairman Schwarz asked for a general plan (Preliminary Landscape Plan) to address the eyesore issues and to move the large items to the rear of the lot. The squatter (business) must be gone before the next meeting. Ms. Nelson further discussed the sidewalk location, in front of the fence on her portion of the property.

There were no comments from Interested Parties. Mr. Ward moved to **CONTINUE** the meeting to September 3, 2024, seconded by Ms. Grotzke and carried by unanimous voice vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Ward, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this matter be CONTINUED to September 3, 2024. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, White, Edenfield

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Other Business

1. CASE #SU23-0004 – Updated / Revised Site Plan – Fuller’s Car Wash

Mr. Trent stated that this matter came before the PC/ZBA in December 2023. At that time, a Site Plan was reviewed and approved by the PC/ZBA and the City Council. They were to begin construction in the spring 2024 (April/May). They returned in June and presented a new Site Plan that was deemed significantly different from the original. After discussion with the City Attorney, a recommendation was made to have the PC/ZBA re-review the new Site Plan and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

Mr. Tommy Briscoe, Site Manager, will present the changes and seeks approval to proceed with the project. Attorney Peck stated that the PC/ZBA could approve it tonight if the changes are minimal; if they are substantial, another hearing would be needed. Tommy Briscoe and Chad Nieuwsma, Operations manager, were sworn in by Chairman Schwarz.

Mr. Briscoe stated that there are four (4) additional changes to the original plan presented in December 2023. Photos of all changes are noted on Attachment D, as presented. The first change is the removal of the canopy and the replacement of two (2) kiosks and an automated attendant at the other lane. The kiosks would have heat and air conditioning to help staff; customers would stay in their vehicles through the wash process.

The second change is the removal of the thirteen (13) vacuum arches; a structure would enclose those vacuum arches inside with a protected area for customers with a fully enclosed structure (for the vacuum motor). Lights are housed under the canopy minimizing the potential for accidental spillage onto the surrounding area.

The third change would be the addition of three (3) cleaning stanchions in the dry off area. That is the only exterior car wash; they would get a hand towel; that would help the staff grabbing towels; an air

tube would be located there for easy accessibility for staff to get in and out. The business model now is that everyone will stay in their car. If they just get an exterior wash, pull up in a separate location with multiple people towel drying the car. If they get full service, they would go to the north, get out of the vehicle and wait at the benches, while employees vacuum the interior. It is safer for everyone and more convenient. If the customer wants to wash and go, that's possible too; if they want towel drying, that would be done; if full service is required, that would be done in the north section. There is no crisscrossing of cars or people on site. All entrances and exits would remain the same; the flow of traffic would be the same; the detail building would be on the north side.

The final change would be adding more landscape area at the entrance of the car wash tunnel canopy and adding two (2) pay stations (kiosks) and two (2) dry stations. The vacuums would still remain on the east side of the property – full service. There would be a separate vacuum building – to keep noise down and one on the other side – those have not changed. The proposed canopy would fourteen feet (14') tall with lighting under the canopy; they close at 6 p.m.; lights may remain on until 7 p.m. for cleaning, etc. Mr. Gutierrez stated that most of the improvements include a better design and operations. They switched architects and came up with a different plan. They will have six (6) planter boxes instead of four (4). The changes are a major improvement.

Mr. Geraghty moved to approve the four (4) revisions, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez and carried by unanimous Roll Call vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Ward, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, White, Edenfield

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Attorney Peck spoke to Board members re: the Cheryl Nelson matter. As time passed and the City came up with new Codes and Ordinances re: how commercial property is used for storage -- it must be paved. Ms. Nelson didn't want to do that; she just stored the cars. She had a pre-existing legal non-conforming use and she was "Grandfathered" in; that use can be continued in that fashion without paving the area. This change that she made with Meade Electric completely changes her use and she loses that pre-existing legal non-conforming use. Now she must abide by the City Ordinances; she is no longer exempt with regard to paving the lot, fencing the area and landscaping. The City doesn't benefit from this; Ms. Nelson is asking a lot in requesting these variances. The Board wants to see a proposal from her re: sidewalk, parkway landscaping, esthetics, etc. Mr. Trent has walked the entire site; there is no major change in elevation; the fence is in disrepair. Chain link fencing with slats is typically not allowed in commercial properties. Transformers are stored there; they tend to leak; many of them are on pallets; it just looks like a junkyard.

Ticket Statistics (for July 2024) - In July, 6 tickets were issued in total - 1 issued for idling trucks prohibited; 5 issued for parking/storing of tractor/trailers; 0 issued for commercial vehicles at a

residence; and Q issued for not being registered to a business. All in all, a substantial reduction from last month.

2018-24 Zoning Cases - New items were updated for the calendar year; no further changes noted.

Upcoming Cases

The next meeting is **September 3, 2024** – two (2) cases are: a Special Use at 430 E. Plainfield Road – a first adult-use cannabis dispensary organization request – a Craft Grower; they would be a “middleman” – taking in raw materials, converting them to edibles and oils; no foot traffic or sales would take place on site; they may pay a PILOT fee. The second request is the Gina Fisher property (vacant lot on the corner of LaGrange/Joliet Road) -- Special Use/Variance for 6131 Joliet Road to expand the current VW Dealership into the vacant lot. They have included parkway landscaping along the exterior as part of their proposal.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Ms. Grotzke, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez, that this meeting be ADJOURNED. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, White, Gutierrez, Edenfield

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman Schwarz declared the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

APPROVED:

Respectfully Submitted,



ROBERT SCHWARZ, CHAIRMAN

/fp