

SECOND FRONT PAGE

VBT Planning Commission approves Brookwood site plan

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The Van Buren Township Planning Commission approved the Brookwood independent, multi-family, senior housing development named Brookwood at its regular meeting June 28.

The project has 132 dwelling units with a combined gross floor area of about 154,110 square feet along with a clubhouse and other site improvements.

It will be on the north side of Tyler Road, east of Morton Taylor, on a 44.4-acre site that has a conserved wetlands at the north end of the project and will have five detention ponds.

Luke Bonner of Bonner Advisory Group of Ann Arbor, consultant, said he wanted to introduce the whole group present for the Brookwood hearing before the planning commission.

First, was the primary owner and investor, Golan Sapir, who flew in from Israel. Investor Edo Furman drove in from New York. Also, there were Chris Garner, Melody Stevens, and Gordon Dionne of Brookwood; Erich Smith and Veronica Clark of Wade Trim engineers; and Tom Gritter of Gritter Real Estate Services.

The township board of trustees had approved the needed pump station for the project at its June 20 meeting, along with special land use for the project. Because of the abundance of wetlands on the property, the sewer must run south and under Tyler Road to hook up to a sewer line and the pump station was needed for that. The pump station will be installed by the project and then turned over to the township for maintenance over the years, with funds provided for that by the project.

The original plan was for Brookwood's sewer line to go out the north end of the project to Morton Taylor Road's sewer line, but with the wetlands being put into a state conservation easement on the north, that wasn't possible.

While the township board was considering the votes on Brookwood at its June 20 meeting there were concerns about the safety of the detention ponds and mosquitoes at the site.

Dan Power, director of planning and economic development said the two ponds at the north end have shallower depths and wouldn't need fencing, but there was board concern on the other three.

He also said ordinances don't say anything about aeration or mosquito controls. Fishbeck engineer Michael Leppek said there was nothing in the engineering manual, either.

Director Power recommended the commission require decorative, four-foot fencing around detention pond #4 that was at the front of the development, near Tyler Road.



Golan Sapir flew in from Israel to witness the Van Buren Township Planning Commission's consideration of final site plan for the Brookwood senior apartment project, for which he is top investor. Sapir shakes the hand of Commission Chairman Brian Cullin after the unanimous vote to approve. Behind, from left, are Commissioner Jeff Jahr and Township Treasurer Sharry Budd.

Bonner said mosquitoes are a property maintenance issue and he agreed the mosquitoes at the north end were heavy. He said aeration is not a good idea for the ponds at the north because they are too shallow.

He agreed with four-foot, decorative fencing along the Tyler Road pond.

Vidya Krishnan, planning consultant from McKenna, said the planners used to require aeration until Wayne County said it was no longer permitted. Now it was spraying as part of a regular thing for ponds under Wayne County rules.

Harry Smith, project consultant from Wade Trim engineers, said they haven't done aeration in a while and a spraying plan is the best solution. He said special plantings, which had been suggested, don't work.

Commissioner Bernie Grant asked if spraying will affect the residents and wildlife and Smith replied the sprays are approved by the state and are safe.

Engineer Leppek has reported that there is a water main that runs east-west on the north side of Tyler Road and there will be two 8" taps in the 12" line.

Access to the sanitary sewer is a little more complicated. The sanitary sewer line runs east-west on the south side of Tyler and the plan is to put a line under the water mains to get to the sewer pipe.

He said there is concern about the depth of the excavation being proposed and the other utilities in that area.

Commissioner Grant, who is an architect, was concerned about the depth of the pipes. He learned the water pipe is 13-14' deep and Leppek said the sewer main was to go 1 1/2 feet lower than the water main, so it would

be about 17-18' for separation.

He said they do not have a detour plan yet for Tyler Road but they won't be able to keep one lane open to traffic.

Leppek said the water line is prestressed concrete pipe, which is fairly delicate. The county drain under the entrance needs to be detailed out, he said. He figured the open cut would be an 18'x20' hole.

Power said the design of the pump station and how pipes cross Tyler Road will not change.

Commissioner Jeff Jahr asked if they are requiring fencing around the ponds?

Commission chairman Brian Cullin said this is a senior complex, but kids visit their grandparents and kids get adventurous.

Smith replied that the flat ponds in the north do not need fencing.

Commissioner Jahr said Pond #4, near the public sidewalk, needs a fence.

Consultant Krishnan said the depth of the three ponds are 4'-8'. She recommended a fence around Pond #4 be required, but not the others.

Early in the discussion, Krishnan had noted the garage for each unit would not accommodate a F-150 pickup or large van. She explained that is not unusual. Power said the garages in this project are 22'x20.8' and standard parking spaces in parking lots are 10'x20'.

Commissioner Medina Atchinson asked if the units were going to be leased out and she asked where she could visit one of their similar complexes.

Chris Garner said this is like other senior independent modern complexes where there are longterm leases. He said they have the

Taylor Brookwood which is on Goddard, west of Telegraph, right next to the post office. They are clearing property for Brookwood Fenton.

The commission voted unanimously to grant final site plan approval following the recommendations from the planning consultant, engineer, and staff, with a mosquito wetland abatement plan and decorative fencing around Pond #4.

In other business at the one-hour-and-45-minute meeting on June 28, the commission:

- Approved the request of Cameron Smyth for rezoning of his 10.1-acres of property at 16355 Haggerty Rd. from R-1B, Single-Family Residential to AG, Agricultural and Estates and sent the case to the township board for final consideration. Power said there is 500' of frontage and it has been zoned R-1B for 49 years. He told the commission he bought the property in December 2021 and has been doing agricultural projects ever since, including starting a fruit tree orchard, starting a one-acre vegetable garden, milling lumber from available hardwoods and tending to his flock of 30 chickens. There was commission concern about runoff to Griggs Drain, and engineer Leppek said there is nothing at this point right now concerning the drain. Krishnan said his next step would be to get a farming license from the state under the Right to Farm Act. She told him he cannot revert back to residential zoning and the zoning stays with the property. He said he has a plan for a you-pick apple orchard in the future and a future vegetable stand. Krishnan noted that residential zoning would not allow 30 chickens. Budd said on his site he cannot mill lumber to sell;

- Approved and sent to the township board for final consideration, zoning ordinance text amendments that will modify the maximum allowable height for detached single family dwellings to allow all detached single-family dwellings to be 2.5 stories in height or 35 feet in height. Krishnan said Van Buren's current ordinance is more restrictive than the standard followed by adjoining communities;

- Learned the TNT Fireworks Tent (approved under temporary land use / planning case 23-013) has been relocated to the north end of the Walmart site due to store remodeling;

- Heard Power report that the commission committees have been meeting and the Agritourism committee may set a meeting at the DeBuck site; and

- Heard Commissioner Atchinson say that Van Buren Township and the city of Belleville are "a married couple that can't be divorced." She said their lives are intertwined and she hopes they will continue cooperating with one another. She said the joint meeting of planning commissions in 2014 was good for everyone and she would like to do it again. Jahr agreed.