

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE
VILLAGE OF NEW LENOX PLAN COMMISSION

Held in the New Lenox Village Hall, 1 Veterans Parkway

Tuesday, February 3, 2015 7:00 p.m.

#15-2-A

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Village of New Lenox Plan Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Mark Muehlnickel.

Chairman Muehlnickel led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following were present: Chairman Mark Muehlnickel, Commissioners Annette Boyd, Joan Byerley, John Kuchler and Rob Moss.

The following were absent: Commissioners Gary Berner and Terry Schultz.

Mr. Muehlnickel announced there was a quorum present for this meeting.

Also present were Community Development Director Robin Ellis, Senior Planner Jeff Smith, Planner Jennifer Neubauer and Secretary Patricia Hansen.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF A REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING OF JANUARY 20, 2015

A motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Commissioner Moss to approve the January 20, 2015 minutes as presented. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

REQUEST FOR COUNTY SPECIAL USE

NR1 Transport, Inc.

14.62 acres located at 10 S. Gougar Road

Michael Hansen, Petitioner

Michael Hansen stated he is co-counsel representing NR1 Transport, Inc. with regard to a petition that is before the Will County Board for a Special Use permit for a truck terminal located on the former T. J. Lambrecht property. He said his co-counsel, Richard Kavanagh is

also present, as well as their Planner Rich Vane, and Amanda Larson, their traffic engineer. Mr. Hansen explained that Mr. Kavanagh will begin the discussion.

Richard Kavanagh introduced himself to the Plan Commission and said he is assisting Mr. Hansen with the application to Will County for the Special Use permit. He explained that NR1 is a logistics company founded in 2009 by brothers Nick and Robert Zitkevicius. He said the brothers have attended numerous safety seminars, and have continually worked on improving their general management skills, particularly their knowledge and experience in logistics. He said they hire experienced drivers with clean driving records, and that medical examinations are required. Mr. Kavanagh continued by stating the performance of each driver is evaluated monthly, and that all drivers are kept up to date on the most current Department of Transportation rules and regulations. He pointed out that NR1 has grown steadily and now owns 37 trucks, 40 trailers, and employs 25, taking into consideration office staff as well as drivers.

Last October, Mr. Kavanagh advised that NR1 purchased the former T.J. Lambrecht site on Gougar Road, north of the tracks and Route 30, noting that it had been vacant for about 5 years. He said the property consists of about 14.5 acres, and includes office space, a repair area for trucks and vehicles, warehouse space, and an area that will be used as a security guard station. Mr. Kavanagh said the request is for a truck terminal, and also pointed out there is no definition in the County's Zoning Ordinance for a truck terminal.

Mr. Kavanagh continued by stating there are a number of uses that are permitted uses in the County's I-2 Zoning Ordinance. He said they include heavy equipment sales and rental, agricultural equipment sales and rental, light equipment sales and rental, motor vehicle repair – general and limited, vehicle storage and towing, bottling works, craft brewing and distilling manufacturing, animal feed preparation – grinding, mixing, and storage, warehousing, wholesaling, and freight movement including beverage warehouse distribution, parcel package delivery service, and grain storage. Mr. Kavanagh explained that this request is deemed to be a truck terminal, and so it is necessary to apply for a County Special Use permit. He said the concerns that have been raised are primarily safety and traffic concerns, and that traffic engineers and land planners have been hired to help resolve these issues.

Amanda Larson of Gewalt-Hamilton Associates introduced herself, stating they are the traffic engineers for this project, and noted the firm was hired to look at traffic impacts from a development of this type. She explained that the purpose of the study was to determine the existing patterns, specifically looking at the cars, buses, and trucks that will be utilizing the roads in the area of the proposed development. She said they wanted to test the impact of additional traffic, so a traffic model was created that would indicate what may happen with the impact of the truck terminal vs. existing traffic, comparing the differences. Ms. Larson said they also developed a tool kit to promote roadway safety to make sure everything would be operating in an efficient manner. Ms. Larson said they did extensive collection, counting two intersections as well as the railroad crossing. She said they looked at U. S. Route 30 and Gougar Road as well as U. S. 6 and Gougar Road and counted for four days, 12 hours a day, from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. She said this was done while Providence High School and Lincolnway West High School

were still in session. As a result, Ms. Larson said it was determined that peak traffic took place on Friday, December 5th, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. She reported that at during the a.m. peak hour at Route 30 and Gougar Road, there were about 2,244 vehicles traveling through the intersection, and about 2,620 vehicles during the p.m. peak hour. She said they also looked specifically at those peak hours, and the number of trucks and busses traveling through the intersection. Ms. Larson advised that in the a.m. peak hours, there were about 5% trucks and 1% busses; in the p.m. peak hours, there were approximately 2% trucks and very few buses. Ms. Larson continued by stating they also looked at the train events and recorded train activity for 12 hours. On the peak day of Friday, December 5th, she said there were five trains traveling through the intersection during the a.m. peak hours; on average, the gates were down about 51.5 seconds. During the p.m. peak hours, she said three train events occurred with the gates being down an average duration of about 53 seconds.

From there, Ms. Larson said they created their traffic generation. Because there is no specific truck terminal use in the typical Institute of Transportation Engineers Traffic Manual, she said they used data provided to them from NR1 Transport based on their current operations, and what they expect their future operations to be over a 20-year time period. In 2034, she said they expect about 110 daily trips, with 32 during the morning peak hour. Ms. Larson said these 32 trips in the morning peak hour are employees only, and trucks entering. She said no trucks will be allowed to exit during the morning hours. Ms. Larson explained that there will be about 36 trips during the p.m. peak hour, and about 65% to 70% of all trips being employees. Ms. Larson said that in 2016, they are expecting only 50 daily trips, 18 in the morning (with no trucks exiting in the morning), and about 20 in the evening. She said this amounts to 65% to 70% employees.

Ms. Larson continued by stating that in the a.m. peak hour of the year 2034, there will be seven trucks entering the U.S. Route 30/Gougar Road intersection, less than 1% of the traffic that is already occurring at that intersection. She said those seven trucks would be using the new site drive for entering only. She explained that their trucks will not be entering the U. S. Route 6/Gougar Road intersection because they will not be allowed to travel north on Gougar Road. Ms. Larson said that during the p.m. peak hour, there will be 11 trucks entering the U. S. Route 30/Gougar Road intersection; she said this is also less than 1%. She said those same 11 trucks would use the new site access, both in and out, and she reiterated that no trucks will enter the U.S. Route 6/Gougar Road intersection, because they are prohibited to go north.

As a result of this information, Ms. Larson said they came up with recommendations. She said they used their synchro model to determine what kind of improvements would help to create a better intersection, a better flow, the ability to handle their trucks as well as their employees. Ms. Larson said their recommendation is to re-optimize the signal timings at U.S. Route 30 and Gougar Road, and in order to accomplish this, they desire to give more green time to the southbound movement, which would create shorter queues, and subsequent to the train events, the queues would clear quicker. She explained that this will also create more gaps in traffic, as this intersection acts on split-phase timing. Ms. Larson said they also recommend prohibiting exiting trucks during the morning peak time between 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. as well as the afternoon peak period between 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. that coincides with school dismissal. She said that

additionally, their recommendation is to prohibit trucks from exiting to the north the entire day.

Mr. Hansen explained that the present facility has a repair facility in the back, along with some warehouse space. He said they are thinking about constructing a dock on the warehouse. He advised that this warehouse will be used as a temporary storage area for the goods that are transported by the trucks. Mr. Hansen went on to say they are working with their engineers with respect to drainage, and they have met with the Will County Forest Preserve with regard to any concerns that they may have. He said there is currently a gate that prohibits anyone from entering the back of the property, adding that this gate will remain. He said the proposed trailer parking area will consist of crushed stone that was put in a number of years ago that is still in excellent condition. Mr. Hansen said they have pledged to the County and to the Village that their engineers will ensure that the area is kept very clean and orderly, and that they will handle any drainage issues that may occur on the property.

Regarding truck movements, Mr. Hansen advised that at their current location, there is an average of 15 trucks going in and out per day, and with 25 current employees, that is another 50 movements per day. In 2036, he said it is estimated that the number of employees will increase to about 30 employees, and the trucks will increase to about 50. He noted that truck movements will vary from time to time. Mr. Hansen said it is indicated on the plan where some of the trucks may be parking. He continued by stating a lot of the trucks would not be parked at that location because the trucks should be out transporting goods.

Mr. Hansen continued by stating that in working with their landscape planner, the New Lenox requirements for Route 30 with respect to screening and landscaping were followed, and on the Gougar Road side, the County's requirements with respect to landscaping were followed as well.

Maureen Harton introduced herself, stating that she is in-house counsel for Providence High School. She acknowledged that Mr. Hansen and the two property owners reached out to her and Father McGrath a few weeks ago to go over the plans and the previously submitted traffic study. Ms. Harton said her intent at tonight's meeting is to make the concerns of her school a matter of public record. She explained that the safety of their students and parents is paramount. Ms. Harton said the bulk of traffic entering and exiting every day consists of vehicles driven by teenagers, typically new, inexperienced drivers. She advised that when some students are pressed for time, these drivers are not always going to make the right decision, and may make a bad decision, like running a yellow or red light or trying to beat a train or a truck. Ms. Harton continued by stating that as everyone already knows, this intersection is already problematic, not only at peak times, but all of the time for Providence High School. She said there are countless after-school athletic competitions, band competitions, and many other types of activities held at the school, not only by the school, but also by many members of the community after regular classes have ended for the day. She said she believes the presence of additional trucks will make an already bad situation worse. According to Ms. Harton, the presence of these large trucks will obstruct the drivers' views of the intersection, and will escalate the dangerous nature of the intersection. She said currently there is not much truck traffic going back and forth on the north side of Gougar Road, but the proposed truck terminal will significantly increase the traffic in that

location.

Ms. Harton explained that NR1 has informed them that they intend to seek permission from IDOT in order to extend the signal length for the Gougar Road traffic. She referred to the article she provided to the Plan Commission that addresses the 1995 Fox River Grove bus/train collision. Ms. Harton explained that the diagram of the intersection as depicted in the article is identical to the intersection at Route 30 and Gougar Road. Ms. Harton referred to this intersection as an interconnected crossing, meaning that there is a need to link the railroad signals to the road signals to ensure safe passage. She advised that Mr. Hansen said they will be asking IDOT for an extended signal length for Gougar Road, but noted that additionally, this request will have to be coordinated with Metra, Union Pacific, and any other railroads that use those tracks.

Ms. Harton said the traffic study indicates in Exhibit 9 that this intersection operates at a “Level of service of Category E”, which is the second worst level of service. She said the study defines this category as “very long delays experienced during the peak hours”. Ms. Harton encouraged everyone to look at the study in order to find more detailed information about this level of service.

Ms. Harton said they were told by NR1 that they intend to shut down their operations for 2½ hours per day. She said she has a bit of a problem with this, as they also said they wish to grow this facility to up to 25 trucks within the next 20 years. Ms. Harton related that she sees no recourse if their intention to shut down their operations for 2 ½ hours per day does not work out.

Additionally, Ms. Harton said she checked the Metra website, and they currently run about 79 commuter trains on the rails every day. Regarding the Union Pacific trains, she said she was unable to find any data as to the number of trains that run on the rails, but noted that she hears the signal all day long.

Ms. Harton concluded by stating that Providence encompasses not just one campus, but three campuses. She said the west campus is comprised of soccer fields that are used in the spring and fall for soccer and baseball, and the campus at Ferro Road and Gougar Road. Ms. Harton advised that she is reluctant to say they object to this, but wishes they would have picked another location.

Senior Planner Jeff Smith referred to the slides and some pictures of the site that were taken in December. He pointed out that a significant amount of the site consists of gravel in the area where up to 50 trailers would be stored. As this is an industrial site, Mr. Smith said the existing concrete and asphalt areas are in disrepair and would have to be repaired and resurfaced. He said the County will require some improvements to the existing parking lot adding some islands as well as restriping and resurfacing. He referred to some slides depicting the viewpoint from the Gougar Road entrance looking back to the intersection at Route 30 explaining that in some cases, cars do back up to and past the site entrance. In another slide, Mr. Smith said it illustrates that traffic does back up well past the site entrance, and that it takes a while for traffic to return to

normal after a Metra train passes the nearby railroad crossing. He said the site plan indicates a potential future area for additional trailer parking. Regarding drainage, Mr. Smith said the site plan indicates there is not a storm water detention facility on the property, and this is something that the Village of New Lenox and Will County have discussed and are recommending for this proposed Special Use. If detention is placed on the site, he said it is possible they would lose future trailer parking.

Mr. Smith continued by stating the site plan indicates potential tractor sales in one area of the site; he said the primary uses, per the application, are a truck terminal and truck repair. With regard to the truck repair, he said a concern of Staff is whether the truck repair involves only their trucks or trucks from other businesses as well. Mr. Smith said it was mentioned to Staff that the truck repair portion of the business would pertain only to the trucks owned by the petitioners, but said this could be an enforcement concern.

Mr. Smith reported that the existing access is approximately 200 feet from the railroad, and they are proposing to widen the entrance, moving the exit lanes further north about 250 feet from the railroad tracks. He said they also plan to provide a wide enough turning radius for trucks to turn into the site. Mr. Smith said the next slide shows the proposed landscaping along Gougar Road; he said they are making an effort to abide by the Village's more stringent landscaping requirements. He said the next slide shows the landscaping along the southern portion of the property; he said they are proposing to provide a 30 foot wide buffer area and place a berm within that area. Mr. Smith pointed out that in looking at the cross-section exhibit, a vehicle traveling along Route 30 will be able to see the trailers parked along the southern perimeter of the property. He suggested that a better plan would be to move the proposed 8-foot fence into the central berm portion, therefore improving the screening of outside storage and trailers to passing traffic on Route 30. Mr. Smith referred to the last slide in the presentation showing existing conditions and what the conditions will be in twenty years. As mentioned, he said this intersection is a "Level of Service (LOS) E", which has significant stacking and queueing of vehicles. In the year 2034, he said the poor LOS "E" conditions will remain the same. Mr. Smith stated that IDOT may not authorize traffic signal timing adjustments if it would compromise traffic movement and efficiency along Route 30. In the traffic study, Mr. Smith said the peak traffic times and numbers were pointed out from the counts that took place in early December 2014, and in estimating the total traffic in the year 2034, the traffic consultant simply took the same December 2014 peak traffic numbers and added estimated truck and employee traffic provided from the proposed business. He said that the traffic consultant should have also looked at future land uses and anticipated growth in the area in order to arrive at more realistic 2034 background traffic.

Mr. Smith said a significant concern of Staff is the ability of trucks to exit safely without impeding traffic traveling northbound on Gougar Road / backing up traffic towards the railroad tracks. He explained that many conditions can be added to a Special Use, but enforcement is a major concern. As noted in the site plan, he said they are proposing to store up to 50 trailers on the site with possibly more trailers. Mr. Smith said a condition can be added for only a certain number of trucks leaving the site, but as business improves, more trucks could be added, and

there is no way that the County or Village would be aware of this. Other conditions relating to trucks only being able to turn left out of the site as well as restricting trucks from exiting during specific peak morning and afternoon periods are also difficult to enforce. Based on all of the traffic concerns, he said Staff is uncomfortable recommending that the Village not object to this County Special Use. He said there are too many issues, questions, and uncertainties and therefore, Mr. Smith said Staff recommends that the Village object to the proposed County Special Use for the truck terminal and truck repair business. He said he is looking for Plan Commission comments and recommendations at this time.

Commissioner Annette Boyd asked how T. J. Lambrecht was able to operate for so many years when the same problems existed. She said she does not know what else could be located along busy railroad tracks. Ms. Boyd said this is a business that belongs in this location. She said the company is willing to limit truck traffic on Gougar Road and provide screening per New Lenox and Will County regulations. Regarding the timed intersections, Ms. Boyd said there are three such intersections in town. She said it is her opinion that the Village should work with the company and come up with solutions that are a little less drastic than filing an objection.

Mr. Muehlnickel said he agrees with Commissioner Boyd regarding her comments about landscaping, and that it appears they are doing everything they can from a landscaping standpoint. From a traffic study standpoint, he said there are concerns. Mr. Muehlnickel said that one of them is that the traffic study indicates that there will be no increase in background traffic over a 20-year time period. Also, he noted that if the green light is extended for the Gougar Road southbound lanes, this indicates to him that anyone traveling east or west on Route 30 will have a longer red light.

Ms. Ellis stated that the bigger concerns are trucks queuing on westbound Route 30 to turn left onto Gougar Road traveling to Cherry Hill. She said the traffic study and the traffic counts seem to focus on the north leg, but she explained that there is a tremendous amount of truck traffic on Route 30 heading south to Cherry Hill. She said this is only expected to increase as there are hundreds of acres of land still recommended for industrial use and zoned for industrial use in that area. In discussions with Civil Engineer Will Nash, Ms. Ellis said his belief is that if the southbound green is extended, IDOT will not allow a longer red on Route 30. Regarding Commissioner Boyd's point about the property's previous use, she said this is a different use because if the T. J. Lambrecht construction equipment was on-site, it was not making money for the company. She advised that there were not larger trucks coming and going to the extent that the trucks will be entering and exiting the proposed truck terminal.

Ms. Ellis said a lot of the suggested conditions lead to the matter of enforcement. She said she believes this is a reputable business, but explained that the Village cannot constantly monitor compliance with the conditions set forth. Ms. Ellis noted that if there are ongoing problems with compliance, the Village would have to be in court litigating. She said Staff feels that if they had things to do over again as to what is the highest and best use of this property is, given the location and the traffic considerations, Staff believes that a truck terminal is not the highest and best use.

Commissioner Boyd said she would not like to see the Village say no to this request; she said there are bigger traffic problems because of Haines School and the busses holding up traffic. She explained that because of the buses, traffic is sometimes backed up, sometimes all the way to Francis Road. Ms. Boyd went on to say the buses on Cedar Road do nothing but stop all the time, impacting all of the traffic on Cedar Road. She said this goes on every day. Ms. Boyd said that a lot of accommodations are made for a lot of things, and that she does not think the Village should say no to this request and work a little more with the petitioner. She said she hates to see this go away, especially with a piece of property like this that is so close to the railroad tracks.

Mr. Muehlnickel said he does not know how to control trucks from turning northbound, especially 5, 10, or 15 years from now, especially if there is construction on I-80 or the interchange. He said he does not know how to police trucks exiting during peak time periods. Mr. Muehlnickel asked when this request will go before the Village Board. Ms. Ellis replied that it is scheduled to go to the Village Board on Monday, six days away.

Commissioner Byerley stated that she also has traffic concerns with the subject request.

Mr. Muehlnickel asked how long it would take to refine the traffic study. Mr. Kavanagh asked if Mr. Muehlnickel meant revising the traffic study, taking into consideration background traffic through 2034. Mr. Muehlnickel replied affirmatively.

Ms. Larson stated that they have already looked into the background traffic, and requested traffic volumes from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. She advised that they just recently received them. Ms. Larson explained that revising the traffic study to include those numbers could probably be completed by Monday. She said they have already looked and updated their synchro model with those numbers, and they have looked at the IDOT planned improvements for the intersection, and with the signal timing changes, the level of service on the intersection does not change. Ms. Larson said the level of service remains Level of Service "E" with the same delay. She noted that they have a meeting planned with IDOT on Friday, February 13th to discuss signal timing adjustments for this intersection. Additionally, Ms. Larson said this will an opportunity for IDOT to see their model and determine if it is feasible.

Mr. Muehlnickel said there are a lot of traffic issues, and too many unknowns with regard to traffic.

Commissioner Moss said it is his opinion that the aesthetics need to be improved from Cedar Road to Gougar Road as this is the window of the Village of New Lenox. He added that T. J. Lambrecht was an eyesore. Mr. Moss said that 60% of everything west of Cedar Road is an eyesore.

Mr. Kuchler commented that anything that is put on this site will cause additional traffic.

Mr. Muehlnickel asked for a motion.

A motion was made by Commissioner Moss and seconded by Commissioner Kuchler to recommend to the Village Board that a legal objection be filed for a request for a County Special Use for property located at 10 South Gougar Road.

Mr. Kavanagh asked Mr. Muehlnickel to continue this for two weeks. He said if continued, they will be able to provide Staff with the traffic information. Regarding enforcement, Mr. Kavanagh said enforcement is the result of the conditions on the Special Use Permit. He said they offered the Village the opportunity to talk about annexing the property, but said they were told the Village is not interested in this use on this property, if it were annexed.

Mr. Muehlnickel stated that as long as they have the data, and can provide it to Staff by Monday he does not see a problem with continuing the request.

Ms. Ellis advised that once the data is received, there needs to be time allotted for Staff's review. She added that Staff's report to the Village Board must be completed by tomorrow. Ms. Ellis explained that from a timing standpoint, they are targeting a March County hearing. She said this has already been continued at the County level several times while they tried to put together the requested site plan, landscape plan, and the traffic study.

Mr. Kavanagh said he is comfortable with continuing this request at the County level to an April meeting. He said he would prefer to go before the Village Board with a favorable recommendation from the Plan Commission.

A motion was made by Commissioner Moss and seconded by Mr. Kuchler to withdraw the motion. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Commissioner Kuchler to continue this request to February 17, 2015. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

The next Plan Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Plan Commission at this time, a motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Commissioner Byerley to adjourn. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

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Patricia Hansen – Senior Administrative Secretary