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Board wants buffer so I-77 drivers won't see funeral home

They also want McEwen funeral home to modernize building it will occupy.

Posted: Sunday, Oct. 19, 2008



Standing outside Paws on the Plaza dog cabins are (from left) Bill Meuhlen of EFC Builders, Dr. Kim Randall, Paws manager Beth Randall Williams and EFC owner Deborah Bowen. Joe Marusak: jmarusak@charlotteobserver.com

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CORNELIUS A McEwen funeral home plans to locate in the former Prime Sirloin restaurant building at 19601 Statesville Ave. (U.S. 21).

A funeral home in a restaurant building from the 1970s?

McEwen representatives told the Cornelius Planning Board last week that the length and width of the building fit their prototype funeral home.

But that didn't sit well with John Hettwer, planning board vice chairman, who had hoped for a more modern building in its place.

"I'm disappointed that we'll be left with a less-than-desirable structure many years into the future," he said.

Hettwer got the board to include a stipulation in the town's list of conditions for the home's

approval that “the applicant shall consider an updated structure for this use.”

The building is north of Las Brizas restaurant and south of the Hampton Inn.

Board members also said they didn't like the idea of a funeral home having signs visible from Interstate 77.

Hettwer said I-77 Exit 28 is the gateway to Cornelius and the town has worked hard to reduce signage in the I-77 corridor.

The board added a provision that the funeral home provide a buffer that blocks the view of the rear of the home from I-77.

Board members also were concerned about motorists seeing hearses parked at the home.

Funeral home representatives said only the front part of a hearse would be visible, and motorists wouldn't be able to tell it's a hearse.

The planning board can only recommend conditions for a project's approval. The final decision to approve a permit for the 9,700-square-foot funeral home rests with the Cornelius Board of Commissioners, likely at its Nov. 3 meeting.

Homes get thumbs down

The Cornelius town board on Monday should reject a developer's plans for 57 custom homes off a planned mile-long Bailey Road Extension, the Cornelius Planning Board unanimously recommended last week.

Planning board members said the 64-acre subdivision by Bluestream Partners LLC doesn't belong in an area zoned to preserve much of the town's remaining forest. The rural zoning designation in that area allows for only one home per five acres, and Bluestream proposes homes on lots of one acre or less.

The developer started work on Bailey Road Extension Oct. 13.

Residents Roelof and Joan Boon pleaded with the board to recommend the project be denied. They said it would bring traffic congestion and ruin their wooded setting, where deer and other wildlife roam. Bailey Forest homes would be on three sides of the home they've lived in since 1974.

Board members agreed with the couple.

“I feel very, very strongly that this portion of town should stay rural preservation,” member Tracey Howell Stehle said of the property's current zoning.

Town commissioners, who have the final say, will have a public hearing and consider approval at 7 p.m. Monday at town hall, 21445 Catawba Ave.

Paws on the Plaza built

EFC Builders of Troutman has constructed 10 dog cabins behind Dr. Kim Randall's Randall Veterinary Hospital Inc., 367 Plaza Drive (N.C. 150).

Called Paws on the Plaza, the cabins have enabled the clinic to expand its boarding and day-care services. The cabins can be heated or cooled, and the animals can enter and leave their temporary domiciles for fresh air and exercise whenever they want during clinic hours.

The clinic also has added more exercise areas for boarded animals.

Beth Randall Williams operates Paws on the Plaza. She trained the past year at K9 Cabins in Troutman.

Details: 704-662-8586 (Randall Veterinary Hospital) or 704-572-0230 (Paws on the Plaza).

More condos planned

The developer of the previously approved Bailey's Glenn older-adult condominium development is asking the town to let it build more domiciles by adding a third residential floor to each of its four planned buildings off Bailey Road and N.C. 115.

Bluestream Partners LLC of Cornelius already is approved for 64 condos in the buildings. Bluestream wants to change the total to 96 condos.

The development is planned for 9.5 acres beside Bailey Road Park, Bailey Road Middle School and the future Bailey Road High School.

The condominium project will have a clubhouse, pool and other amenities. Construction is scheduled to finish in 2010.

To the east of the development is the Four Seasons at Bailey's Glenn active adult community by national builder K. Hovnanian Homes. That 150-acre development is affiliated with Bailey's Glenn and also targets the 55-and-older population. It's under construction.

By a 4-to-1 vote, the Cornelius Planning Board last week recommended approving the change.

Member Kevin Creighton voted against the measure. Town leaders have been saying Cornelius already has too much multi-family housing, Creighton said.

The town board will hold a public hearing on the request and consider approving the change at its meeting 7 p.m. Monday at town hall, 21445 Catawba Ave.



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