

Town residents up in arms over issues

Written by CAROL POMEDAY
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Foes of zoning changes, watercraft users and dog shelter get some satisfaction

Belgium Town Hall was filled Monday with residents concerned about three issues — zoning changes recommended by the Plan Commission, noise created by personal watercrafts launched at Sandy Beach Road and a nonprofit Jack Russell terrier rescue operation in Lake Church.

John Behnke of Sandy Beach Road presented a petition signed by 13 residents of Sandy Beach Lane and Sandy Beach South asking town officials to prohibit parking on the beach and limit parking on Sandy Beach Road to three or four vehicles. Currently, parking is prohibited between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m.

The petition also asks the town to prohibit the launching and recovery of motorized watercrafts after 6 p.m.

“It has gotten better since Mike Cutter (Department of Natural Resources warden) talked to the Jet Skiers, but what worries us is that any day they could go back to what it was,” Behnke said. “I think this is proactive and stops something in the future.”

However, Supr. Tom Winker said he doesn't want to restrict access to the lake.

“That's left to the DNR. But I think it's important to get both DNR officials here to meet with you face to face and answer your questions,” Winker said.

Cutter and Kathi Kramasz, water management specialist, were unable to attend Monday's meeting but plan to be at the Town Board's Monday, Aug. 2, meeting to clarify what the town can do to provide relief for residents disturbed by personal watercraft riders who enjoy jumping waves in the area.

Cutter sent an e-mail clarifying when vehicles are allowed on the beach. Boating regulations allow vehicles to use the lakebed to launch or retrieve watercrafts but vehicles cannot park on there, he said.

The petition was referred to the Plan Commission for a recommendation.
Patience thin with dog rescue operation

Neighbors of a Lake Church resident who has allowed a friend to house as many as 16 rescued Jack Russell terriers in a former chicken coop on her property said the situation has gotten worse, not better.

“Technically, she's not violating any town laws because we don't have a limit on the number of dogs allowed,” Zoning Administrator Charles Parks said. “She's not running a business. She doesn't board other people's dogs. She doesn't breed them. It's just a person who has a lot of

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dogs and she's a guest."

Parks said he believes the dogs should have licenses, but he's not sure who would be responsible for that — the homeowner or Penny Wagner, who operates the dog rescue facility.

One resident said the straw bedding is burned almost every day and it smolders for three days.

"I can't open my windows or hang out clothes," she said.

Neighbor Kerri Hunsinger added, "Her mission is admirable, but I feel sorry for the dogs. She's not a neighbor. She doesn't live here. Your idea of temporary and my idea are two different things."

"I can't believe that the Humane Society would find those conditions OK," said Ralph DeWall, who lives north of the property. "It's been 90 degrees and they're locked up in that shed to keep the noise down."

Winker said, "I think that with the weather conditions, we should look into it."

Town Chairman Francis Kleckner said he would contact the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department again. An officer who inspected the operation in May told Kleckner the dogs were well cared for.

In an interview last month, Wagner said the Lake Church site was temporary until she found a place in the country where she can keep the dogs that she rescues. She said she seeks homes for the dogs, carefully matching the owners to the dogs, and offers to take the animals back at any time.

Zoning changes questioned

The Town Board approved most of the zoning changes proposed by the Plan Commission following a public hearing, but referred two revisions — one dealing with mobile homes and recreational vehicles and the other prohibiting fences on Lake Michigan beaches — back to the panel for clarification.

Craig Beecher, who lives on Sandy Beach South, questioned a clause that allows only one primary structure on a lot. The Plan Commission recommended adding the sentence "Mobile homes and recreational vehicles are not permitted."

"Does this eliminate storage of recreational vehicles on lots?" he asked.

When told that is allowed, Beecher commented, "You might want to tighten up your language."

He also questioned the town's intent in prohibiting fences "on beaches and sand dune areas of Lake Michigan."

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“The DNR says no fences from the high-water mark to the vegetation line. Is this the same or more restrictive?” Beecher asked.

Kleckner said he believes the intent is to reinforce the restriction on beaches.