

Commission stands by Meijer approval

Written by SARAH McCRAW
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Despite residents' appeal, Grafton officials reaffirm permit allowing firm to build 191,352-square-foot store

Despite an appeal from a local couple challenging plans for construction of a Meijer supercenter in Grafton, the village's Plan Commission on Oct. 4 unanimously reaffirmed its earlier approval of a conditional-use permit for the project.

Nearly 30 people, including residents who live near the 33-acre project site on Port Washington Road, attended a four-hour meeting that revisited the commission's Aug. 28 decision.

Meijer, a Michigan-based company, had received approvals from both the commission and Village Board to build a 191,352-square-foot store on the east side of Port Washington Road near Hunters Lane.

Following a presentation on the proposed store by Meijer officials, attorney Joseph Cincotta presented a petition filed by Jack and Michelle Corrao, 2474 Caribou La., who live in the nearby Hunters Crossing subdivision.

In the petition, the Corraos challenged the village's approval process, questioning the public's need for a large-scale retail outlet, the impact a store operating 24 hours a day would have on the area, traffic management and potential negative impact on nearby property values.

"Having the store open 24/7 seems like it will invite problems that are not needed in the area," Michelle Corrao told the commission.

"It will definitely disturb a once safe and quiet area."

Fellow Hunters Crossing resident John Enright, 2360 Caribou La., also spoke against allowing an 24-hour business.

"It is reasonable to believe there will be nighttime holdups. By the time the Grafton police arrive, the suspect could be on their way to Port Washington, Saukville or West Bend," Enright said.

"(The store) will take away from my personal security and my enjoyment of my Grafton property."

However, Grafton Police Capt. Emmet Grissom said that as part of a development agreement with the village, Meijer would be required to have loss-prevention personnel on staff 40 hours a week, along with a surveillance system that must be inspected by police before the store can open.

"With the aspects of it being a 24-hour store, we don't see this being a problem or creating an

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increase of crimes for our department,” Grissom told the commission.

Grissom also said that Hunters Lane isn't a major arterial road, so traffic shouldn't increase significantly in the area because of the store.

A traffic-analysis company hired by Meijer reported that 5% of all traffic heading to and from the store would travel on Hunters Lane.

A traffic expert hired by the Corraos agreed with the 5% estimate but said that amount would be a significant increase in traffic for a subdivision.

Commission members said that while some people may not want to live near the store, many others may find the proximity appealing.

“There are plenty of people that do want to live near this area for the convenience,” commission member Amy Plato said.

Village Attorney Mike Herbrand told the commission that the need for a Meijer supercenter or any other store is subjective.

“It is not for you folks to decide when residents have enough grocery stores, banks or bowling alleys,” Herbrand said.

Village President Jim Brunnquell said the Meijer project would be an asset to the community and is consistent with the village's land-use plans for the freeway corridor.

“This particular development, is it serving a need? Yes, it's aiding in a zoning area that adds to retail in the community,” Brunnquell said.

“This does meet a public need.”

Plans call for the supercenter to sell groceries and home goods. The project includes a parking lot for 681 vehicles and two out lots for future development.

Under a village ordinance, a conditional-use permit is required for any commercial development exceeding 50,000 square feet.

On Sept. 4, the Village approved rezoning and a certified survey map for the project.

Pending finalization of a developer's agreement between the village and Meijer, construction of the supercenter is expected to begin next year. The store is expected to open in 2014.

Meijer also plans to build a supercenter in Franklin.