

Complications plague simple land transaction

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Trustee's attempt to acquire remnant lot has officials treading carefully

What was supposed to be a simple deal for a remnant parcel of village-owned land keeps getting more and more complicated.

Village Trustee Donald Dohrwardt approached the village last month with the idea of swapping remnant lots on the community's south side and offering to pay the difference in the values.

The landlocked parcel Dohrwardt is eyeing is 30-feet-by-700-feet, and abuts land he owns on Meadowlark Road. The land he offered is in the same area and slightly smaller, 33-feet-by-570-feet.

To cover the nominal difference in values, Dohrwardt offered to pay the village a little under \$900. He came up with the value based on what the village has charged for land in its industrial park.

That proposal was endorsed by the Plan Commission, but it took a different direction when the Village Board was presented with the offer late last month.

Because Dohrwardt and his wife Lisa are both village trustees, they recused themselves from the board deliberations — stepping away from the board table and sitting in the audience.

After considering the possibility of incurring surveying costs for what could be deemed a subdividing of land that could easily exceed the value of the property, Dohrwardt told trustees last month he is now interested in buying the lot outright for \$887.

Dohrwardt said he would also be willing to split the closing costs on the transaction, which he said should amount to no more than a couple hundred dollars.

Because that approach hadn't been presented to the Plan Commission, it was returned to the planning body.

During last week's commission meeting, Village President Chuck Lopicola added a new wrinkle to the matter. He suggested the land be offered to the three adjoining property owners, including Dohrwardt, with the sale going to the highest bidder.

One of those landowners, Badger Paperboard, was responsible for the creation of the remnant lot when it bought land in the industrial park for its manufacturing plant but had no interest in the excess outlot.

Lopicola said the highest-bid approach would be the most transparent way to handle the transaction, considering a village official is involved.

Dohrwardt said he would not object to the approach, but said he felt he was being singled out.

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“I have a problem because I am a citizen and a trustee. It is the simple perception (of favoritism) we seem to be afraid of,” Dohrwardt said.

“Being a trustee throws sawdust into the gearbox. We already spent \$400 for Plan Commission meetings on a property that is going to cost \$800.”

Lapicola’s compromise was also endorsed by the Village Board last week, with Don and Lisa Dohrwardt abstaining from the vote.

The adjoining property owners were given 30 days to submit bids for the parcel.