

Dawgs in Motion gets fence waiver

Written by Mark Jaeger

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Community Development Authority agrees added expense would do little to benefit community

The Village of Saukville's Community Development Authority has unanimously approved a waiver that will exempt a local business from having to erect a costly wooden fence on its Dekora Woods Boulevard property.

Sue Richison, owner of the dog grooming and training business Dawgs in Motion, lobbied hard to keep from having to erect a wood plank fence around the 110-by-110-foot exercise and agility-training area at the rear of the property at 580 Dekora Woods Blvd.

The area is currently enclosed by black vinyl-covered cyclone fencing.

When Richison opened her business in 2008, the village did not allow cyclone fencing in its business park. Village officials envisioned the fence she put up as a temporary solution.

Since that time, the zoning code for the industrial park was amended to allow chain-link fences with conditional-use approval.

During a recent public hearing on the request, Richison said the wooden fence would be costly and harmful to her canine clients.

"If we put a wood fence all the way around, there will be virtually no air flow in the exercise area, which is not good for our dogs. Our goal is to keep them inside an enclosed area and keep them safe," she said.

Richison said several clients have been attracted to her business after seeing dogs running in the enclosed area.

"I consider the fence my store window and would hate to see it covered by a wood fence, which I believe would look less attractive than what we have now," she said.

A handful of people showed up supporting her waiver request at a recent public hearing, including Milwaukee dog trainer Andrew Burns.

"Putting a wood fence around the area is just going to get the dogs overheated in summertime," Burns said.

"In addition, if a dog can see people driving up and walking into the facility, they are going to bark less. If they hear a car pulling up but can't see the people, they are going to bark more, so the business will have more noise."

Richison said she also contacted the owners of neighboring businesses about her desire to retain the chain-link fence, and several said they were unaware there was a fenced-in area at the rear of her property.

Several other business people said the village should work with Richison, especially in the current economic climate.

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Eloise Lembke, a village resident and a real-estate agent with Century 21, said Richison's business provides an attractive service to people considering the community for relocation.

"Saukville is an easier sell when you have facilities like Dawgs in Motion," Lembke said.

Beth Schaefer, owner of Lighthouse Florist & Wine Gallery on Dekora Woods Boulevard, said she sees the fence issue from the perspective of a customer and a business owner.

"As a satisfied client, I do not want to stress out my dog," Schaefer said.

"As a small business owner, I know what the financial burden of making this kind of improvement would be and I don't know that I could afford it at this point. Saukville doesn't want any more empty buildings."

Richison also seized on that theme.

"We should be promoting our businesses instead of having them spend money unnecessarily," she said.

One contractor estimated that putting up a moderately priced wooden fence would cost about \$6,600, although more expensive options are available.

Trustee Robert Hamann said the public outcry made the CDA's decision simple.

"The question is not whether a stockade fence or a picket fence should be required. It comes down to a question of aesthetics. What is there now is just about invisible," Hamann said.

"Since the code now allows a conditional-use for the cyclone fence, this is something I could support."

The committee approved the waiver, with Richison agreeing to add plants along the west side of the fence to soften its appearance.