

VILLAGE OF MANTENO
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 8, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call: Present: Dan McGowan, Jerry Dole, John Fetherling, Emily Fisher-Gentry, and Francis Smith
Absent: Todd Creek, Melvyn Marshall,

Attendance: Chris LaRocque, Director of Building & Zoning; Trustee Joel Gesky, Trustee Todd Crockett; Trustee Diane Dole; Trustee Wendell Phillips; Stacy Konway; William Johnson; Glenn Mauery; Larry Behdle; Chelsey, Bannister, Regional V.P. for Sun Communities; Collin Gray, SEECO Consultants, Inc.

Pledge of Allegiance – Chairman Smith

MOTION: A motion was made by Fetherling, seconded by McGowan, to waive reading of the minutes of February 9, 2016 and accept them as presented. Motion approved 5-0. Creek and Marshall absent.

Chairman Smith opened the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING:

PC-VAR 15-08 – Sun Communities, owner of Oak Ridge Mobile Home Park, is requesting a variance to village ordinance 9-5-8C Mobile Home Stand, Construction, to allow for the use of tie-down piers instead of full slab construction. Mr. Collin Gray, SEECO Consultants, handed out a brochure listing his company's qualifications as consultants to Sun Communities concerning this variance request. Sun Communities have hired him to look into engineering the piers that would be designed if the variance is approved.

Mr. Gray's company would do the soil test borings along with the structural engineering to design the piers. Mr. Gray would also engineer a ribbon of concrete about six (6) inches thick around the perimeter to support the bottom the skirt. Mr. Gray stated that the use of piers would be more expeditious and a time saver in construction. The use of piers would be a cost savings to the Sun Communities and also there would be less construction spoils and debris to be hauled off, which would keep village streets cleaner.

Mr. Gray stated that the piers could be designed so that it would not hurt the value of the current homes in the park. There are 45 lots available in the park that would have the piers installed instead of the slab construction.

Commissioner Fetherling asked Mr. Gray about how would the perimeter concrete, which will hold the skirt up, be designed to stop frost from heaving it during the winter time. Mr. Gray stated that the skirt does not have any weight and expansion joints can be added, but the concrete would only heave a ½”.

Commissioner Fetherling asked how would the units be anchored to the piers. Mr. Gray stated that the current slab system uses CMU (concrete masonry units) that are grouted into the slab and then a hook wire is connected to the beams which are then tied to the slab. Mr. Gray stated that the use of piers is more cost effective and is better structurally engineered. Mr. Gray stated that each pier holds the weight from its own spot whereas the current way has the weight on a six (6) inch slab.

Trustee Dole asked why the request for the change on the last 45 lots. Mr. Gray was contacted in January asking him to see if the using of piers was a feasible option. He looked at the manufacturer plans and felt that the use of piers was a feasible option.

Mr. Chelsey Bannister, Regional Vice President with Sun Communities, was introduced by Mr. Gray. Mr. Bannister stated that they were not the original owners. In other areas of the country they have used the pier system to anchor the units. Chairman Smith asked if Sun Communities was aware of the requirement of the slab foundation when they purchased Oak Ridge. Mr. Bannister stated he was not part of the due diligence so he cannot answer that question. Mr. Bannister stated that he has been instructed to see if the use of piers or runners could be used as an alternate to boost the selling of new homes. Mr. Bannister stated the company would like to see the park filled up and being able to sell the new homes at a fair price will accomplish this goal. Current homes that are on the slabs are priced at \$79,900. Putting that same home on piers could drop the price to \$69,900 or \$72,900. Mr. Bannister stated that the value of the current homes would not be affected if the pier system was allowed.

Commissioner Dole asked would the taxes be reduced if the pier system was used. Mr. Bannister stated that the plan of the company is to sell homes, since that was not gaining the traction as anticipated alternative measures were investigated.

Commissioner Fetherling asked would the use of piers lower the sales tax. Mr. Bannister stated he would have to research that and get back to the commission. Mr. LaRocque stated he asked the Township Assessor, Lois Meyer, this question. She stated that regardless of the foundation, it does not alter the taxes. Sales tax is only paid on new homes. The value of the pre-owned homes is selling for less than the new homes, so using the pier system would not adversely affect the current homes. There is a market for the pre-owned homes, but the new homes are not selling.

Stacy Conway, Community Manager with Oak Ridge, stated that the company has a sales person in the community who does comps on similar homes so that a value can be found on pre-owned homes. The pre-owned homes are not compared to the new homes.

Chairman Smith asked if the company is losing home sales to other parks in the area. Mr. Bannister stated that the company is not losing sales of new homes to other communities but the company is not getting the new home sales as they had anticipated.

Commissioner Fetherling asked if there are any problems with the current homes that are in the park. Ms. Conway stated there are currently 375 units in the park. Mrs. Conway stated that there were no reported problems with the slab, skirting or rodents under the units.

Commissioner Fetherling stated if there are no problems with the current system, why would the company want to change. Mr. Bannister stated that company has a system that works well throughout the rest of the country and they would engineer the foundation system to guard against any village concerns. Mr. Bannister does not want the value of the community to go down. The intent is to find a way to jumpstart the market for the new home sales. The company had plans to fill up the community quickly and that has not got the traction as they anticipated.

Commissioner Dole stated he appreciates the intent of Sun Communities, but the Village has had this foundation process in place for numerous years and it has worked well for the Village.

Commissioner McGowan stated the skirting issue is a problem for him. He doesn't see how the proposed plan to put concrete on grade would keep the skirting from moving and denting during the winter time. Commissioner McGowan stated that he has seen concrete heave more than ½ inch. Commissioner Fetherling stated his driveway heaves 1 ¼" every winter. Mr. Gray stated that the skirting would not bend or break, it is only cosmetic in nature and its purpose is to keep out vermin from underneath the unit. Mr. Gray stated that concrete should never heave more than a ½ inch.

Chairman Smith stated that Sun Communities is a very successful national firm and he asked Mr. Bannister why hadn't the company requested this variance when they first considered buying the community. Mr. Bannister stated it was a good point, but was not thought about at the point of the acquisition. Chairman Smith stated that the Plan Commission members must do what is best for the members of the community and the Village. Chairman Smith stated that this full slab foundation was in place when the first manufactured home park was built and has worked for 35-40 years.

Commission Fetherling stated that if the village would approve this variance precedence might be set for any current or future developments.

Trustee Gesky stated he had meet with several residents in Oak Ridge Park and the overwhelming response is they would not like to see the change.

Trustee Crockett asked Mr. Gray what would be placed in between the piers. Mr. Gray stated that it would be clay dirt. Trustee Crockett asked about what process is used to help with the moisture content under the unit when there is dirt under it compared to a full foundation.

Trustee Wendell Phillips stated that he has been notified that another park that is located 5 miles south of Manteno is removing pier systems and using the full slab system.

William Johnson asked if you start at the top soil how is the frost depth figured out. Mr. Gray stated the minimum depth is 3 ½ to 4 feet, but soil borings must be completed.

Trustee Dole asked Mr. Bannister if they have ever needed to remove their pier system in any other of their other communities. Mr. Bannister stated that they have never had to remove piers and it is very rare for them to use the full slab system. It is used in Florida.

Mr. Chris LaRocque requested to answer the question concerning a moisture barrier asked by Trustee Crockett earlier. He stated that the Village requires visqueen to be used as a moisture barrier in a crawl space. Mr. Bannister stated that visqueen is used in the pier system to act as a moisture barrier.

There were no other comments from the commission members or the public.

Chairman Smith closed the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Smith stated that members of the Plan Commission were presented a recommendation to approve the variance in their agenda packets. Chairman Smith asked for a motion.

Commissioner Fetherling stated that he has an issue with the Findings of Fact that were presented for this variance request. Mr. Fetherling had issues with items: a, b, c, d & e.

MOTION: A motion by Fetherling, seconded by McGowan, to recommend to the Village Board that the variance request be denied. Motion approved 5-0. Creek & Marshall absent.

The recommendation will be forwarded to the Village Board.

UPDATES:

Mr. LaRocque stated that the Animal Hospital is about 60% completed and is hoping to be opened in May.

MOTION: A motion by Fetherling, seconded by Gentry to adjourn the Plan Commission meeting at 6:47 p.m. Motion approved by voice vote.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Darla Hurley, Deputy Village Clerk