

Opposing views aired on Oswego retail center

Developer touts economic benefits; neighbors wary of project's impact

By John Etheredge

A initial motion to approve an annexation agreement for a shopping center proposed for development at the southwest corner of U.S. Route 34 and Orchard Road on Oswego's far west side was rejected by the village board in a unanimous ballot this week.

But board members are expected to vote again on the agreement for the 19.49 acre Xander Crossing shopping center when they gather for their next regular meeting on Monday, Sept. 24.

As a large group of nearby homeowners—some in support and others opposed to the project looked on Monday evening—board members voted 5-0 against a motion to waive a second public reading of the project's annexation agreement and to approve the agreement.

Board member Lori West was absent from the meeting.

As a result of the board's vote, Karl Ottosen, the board's attorney, said the agreement will automatically be placed on the board's next meeting agenda for the second public reading and a possible final vote.

Ottosen confirmed that under state law the agreement will require a super majority vote of the board—five favorable ballots—to be approved.

Monday's vote came after board members listened to 45 minutes of public testimony—both in favor and opposed—to the project as proposed by HRM Properties.

Harold Oliver, president of HRM Properties, told board members the retail center would be home to a daycare center, three national retail or restaurant tenants, banks operated by the Oswego Community Bank and Old Second National Bank, respectively, and additional retail tenants.

Oliver provided board members with financial projections that estimate the center's total property tax value at between \$25 and \$30 million.

Based on a value of \$25 million, the data shows the center generating a total of \$528,016 in property taxes, including \$359,632 for the Yorkville School District.

Based on a value of \$30 million, the data shows the center generating a total of \$633,620 in real estates, including \$431,558 for the Yorkville School District.

Oliver said property taxes on the parcel this year total \$17,332.

Oliver noted the center, when fully developed, would generate between 400 and 450 new jobs and provide an additional source of sales tax revenues for the village.

Oliver added that his firm is not requesting any financial incentives or inducements from the village to construct the project.

In an effort to address concerns raised by several residents of the unincorporated Riverwood Farms Subdivision, which borders the project site to the west, Oliver said his firm would excavate a dry

“The fact that we have national retailers that would like to go into some of those slots may only help recoup some of the loss that may be incurred by the potential losing of a one acre lot.”

Tony Giles
Oswego Village Board member

bottom detention basin along the south side of the project site and divert stormwater drainage southeast, away from Riverwood Farms to Orchard Road.

Also, he said one of two homes in the Riverwood Farms Subdivision that had previously been proposed for demolition to make room for the shopping center has been sold and will remain a single family home. The home is located at 122 Riverwood Drive.

The proposed daycare center would be located along the south side of Route 34 on the back portion of the lot at 106 Riverwood Drive, according to Oliver.

Oliver noted his firm would construct a berm with landscaping and fencing to separate the shopping center from homes in Riverwood Farms.

At the homeowners' request, Oliver said there would be no vehicular access from Riverwood Drive into the center.

Jessica Bannister, another Riverwood Farms homeowner, told the board Xander Crossing, if approved as now proposed, would “cross a line.”

“That's a line that's been established in the comprehensive plan and is recognized as a border between residential and commercial,” Bannister said.

However, David Cinto, also a Riverwood Farms homeowner, voiced support for the project.

Noting that he has served previously on referendum committees for the Yorkville School District, Cinto noted that the project would generate a significant amount of needed additional property tax revenue for the school district.

“I don't see this as causing a problem,” Cinto said. “I see it as a ‘no-brainer.’”

Attempting to summarize the decision before the board, board member David Schlaker noted that the board's vote “all comes down” to the one acre parcel on the back part of 122 Riverwood Drive, and whether or not rezoning it for business use for the daycare center would represent an intrusion into Riverwood Farms.

“The big question is: Do I feel this would be intruding on the residential neighborhood?” Schlaker asked.

Schlaker said he agreed that HRM's initial proposal would have been an intrusion into the subdivision since it called for the daycare center and a professional office building to locate on the two Riverwood lots.

“Right now, I feel improvements have been made (in the plan), given the berming and the cooperation from the developer with the types of materials to be used and the height of the berm. There would also be no visible site line (of the center from Riverwood Farms),” Schlaker said.

Board member Tony Giles described the annexation agreement as posing as “major issue” for the board.