

Lowe's

from page A1

its own project after negotiations to include their property with the Grand/Sakwa development fell through. Later, council members chided Ratner for starting off the meeting on a contentious note.

While council member Jon Grant said the city would have set up a similar meeting for Lowe's if asked, Ratner countered, "We would not have involved the city in a competitive situation."

City attorney John Donohue asked whether Ratner was accusing the city of interfering with Lowe's development; Ratner replied, "I don't know." Bates then sternly recommended he get on with his presentation.

The plan

Evan Vaelomink, representing Lowe's, said his company is in the midst of a boom, opening an average of two stores per week. While he acknowledged their biggest competitor is Home

Depot, he said of the company's nearly 700 locations, 160 are located within three-quarters of a mile from a Home Depot.

"There is a real opportunity and a real case for co-existence," he said. "Each serves a real niche."

Vaelomink said the project would offer several public benefits, including drainage improvements and the potential for a connector road between North-western and Orchard Lake, with improvements to Ludden. High-view residents would also have improved access to major thoroughfares through a frontage road on the site.

He said while initial plans called for a northern orientation, Lowe's was willing to turn the building around to face east, so that it would "embrace" the Grand/Sakwa project. The company was also willing to duplicate materials designated for buildings in the shopping center.

'Is it too much trouble for you guys to stop it now, get together and come back with a cohesive plan? Be real team players here.'

Vicki Barnett
Hills City Council member

All storm water detention would be done underground, with over-sized drainage pipes, which would help preserve open space. Lowe's would also dovetail its efforts with traffic studies done as part of the Grand/Sakwa project.

Following the Lowe's presentation, councilwoman Vicki Barnett made an impassioned plea for the company to reorient the property so that it would flow into the shopping center.

"What we want is one, mixed use, cohesive project," she said. "Is it too much trouble for you guys to stop it now, get together and come back with a cohesive

plan? Be real team players here. Turn this center around."

Vaelomink said Lowe's was more than willing to work with Grand/Sakwa; however, Gary Sakwa said he had already been rebuffed a number of times in his efforts to work with the company. He called the Lowe's proposal "a terrible joke."

"If it could have been done, it would have been done," he said. "I'm not stopping my project."

Stumbling blocks

Parking proved to be a stumbling block, with officials confused over several different estimations of the required number of spaces. While the proposal came up short all around, Vaelomink explained the planning commission had asked for

parking spaces to be "banked," leaving green spaces that could be converted for parking when the need arose.

But the killer for councilman Jerry Ellis came after he looked at a map of the area bounded by Orchard Lake, 14 Mile and Northwestern. It showed Kmart to the west, Lowe's to the north and Grand/Sakwa to the east would essentially isolate a small group of homeowners whose properties were on Highway.

"I have eight homeowners out there I will not strand," he said prior to his vote against the project. "I will not leave these people there."

Ellis also didn't see any real public benefit and said the project didn't meet the requirements of the PUD ordinance. He added, "You're a good company, a solid company. I own stock in you. But this plan doesn't reflect any innovation. I urge you to come back, but I urge you to try to work with these people. I do want to see you in this community."

Councilman Barry Brickner

first suggested tabling the plan until Lowe's had a chance to regroup, but his motion failed on a 5-2 vote. Barnett then made the motion to deny the application, which passed unanimously.

While there was no guarantee Grand/Sakwa would buy out the eight homes and proceed with Phase II of that project, councilman Chris McRae said that approving Lowe's would close that door altogether. Gary Sakwa said he would definitely not proceed with that phase if Lowe's was approved.

"The only guarantee I have is I can leave the door open," McRae said. "This is way too much building on way too little land. That's what it comes down to for me."

Vaelomink said denial of the PUD would only hinder the negotiation process with Grand/Sakwa. Approval, he said, would put both parties on equal footing.

"If they aren't on equal footing, in business, that means end of story," he said.

Cow

from page A2

the scene at about 1 p.m., they discovered a cow tied to a rope with blood coming out of its mouth, said Chuck Nebus, assistant police chief.

A 39-year-old Farmington Hills man had apparently bought the animal, in Romulus and brought it home in his van intending to slaughter it. He was cited for animal cruelty and illegally transporting an animal. He has to appear in 47th District Court on or before Monday, July 30.

Under city ordinance, both offenses are misdemeanors and punishable by a \$500 fine and or 90 days in jail.

"We are alleging cruelty based on the fact that it was only a 4 foot by 5-foot area the cow was transported in," Nebus said. The man also had a loose metal ladder, sharp metal tools and metal buckets in the van.

The cow had apparently escaped when the man tried to remove it from the van, which prompted some local residents to

call police when they saw it loose in the neighborhood.

The cow was taken in by the Oakland County Sheriff's Department animal control division.

Sgt. Jerry McNair of Oakland County Animal Control said Wednesday morning that the cow was being housed at a privately owned Oakland County farm. Oakland County contracts with private farm owners in cases like these.

"We don't have the facilities to house livestock," McNair said. McNair said they were awaiting results of a veterinary examination of the animal, which may have been injured when it escaped. The cow could also have a broken leg, he added.

The cow's next destination depends upon the results of the veterinary examination.

Nebus said police believe the cow bled from the mouth as a result of hitting its head on the ground while it tried to escape, not as a result of being jostled in

the van.

"This case may seem unusual, but about 20 years ago, it wasn't unusual for officers to respond to such cases, Nebus said.

"Occasionally there'd be times a cow carcass would be found (in a residential area) but we haven't had any problems with it in recent times," he said.

"It's been a bad week for cows," Nebus said, referring to a recent incident at Farmington's Silver Dairy, where the trademark cow's legs were cut off.

Lee Blizman, zoning division supervisor with the city's planning and community development department, said livestock is not allowed in residential areas.

"Animals like that have to be on a farm, and farms, by our definition, are 10 acres or more," Blizman said.

Likewise, buildings that house livestock cannot be within 200 feet of a property line.

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