

**Barry County Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2020**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Clyde Morgan in the Community Room of the Tyden Center located at 121 South Church Street in Hastings. The Planning Commission members in attendance included: Morgan, John LaForge, Jack Miner, Joyce Snow, Ben Geiger, Robert Vanderboegh, and Jack Nadwornik. Others in attendance included Chris Nelson, Frank Mix, Jr., Barry County Planning Director James McManus, and many other interested people.

Motion by Nadwornik to approve the agenda as printed. Support by LaForge. All ayes - motion carried.

The Planning Commission reviewed the Minutes of January 27, 2020. Motion by LaForge to approve the minutes as presented. Support by Vanderboegh. All ayes - motion carried.

BUSINESS

Morgan explained the procedures of a public hearing and noted any public comments would be limited to three (3) minutes.

Site Plan Reviews

Case No. PR-2-2020

**Christopher Shires (Applicant)
Gilmore Car Museum/Gilmore Foundation
(Property Owner)**

Morgan recessed the Planning Commission, opened the public hearing, and asked a representative from the museum to present the request.

Chris Nelson, an architect from Schley and Associates, represented Gilmore and said they have two projects that they are working on. He noted the larger project is a new building for a muscle car museum, which will be designed to look like a 60's car dealership. He noted the second project is an expansion of the existing Classic Car Museum in the Octagon barn. Nelson reviewed the plans with the Planning Commission.

Morgan asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the request. There was no response.

Morgan asked if anyone was opposed. There was no response.

Morgan closed the public hearing and reconvened the Planning Commission.

LaForge noted there will be more people on site with a new museum. He asked if a hotel would be forthcoming. He was concerned about the sewer system. Nelson said the sewer system will be public. He said he had no plans for a new hotel.

Geiger asked about fire lane access to the rear of the new museum. Nelson said there will be a small slope to the rear of the building. He said the building will have full fire suppression.

McManus commented that the museum property was approved as Planned Unit Development and will continue to be evaluated in that capacity. He noted that the rear setback and lot coverage requirements can be adjusted. He said verification of the sewer agreement would be needed before any permits could be released.

Motion by Snow to approve Case No. PR-2-2020 as presented. Support by Vanderboegh.

Roll call vote taken: 7 ayes - 0 nays - motion carried. Site Plan Approved.

Case No. PR-3-2020

Frank M. Mix, Jr. (Applicant)
Frank M. Mix, Jr./Hastings Dog Park Companions
(Property Owner)

Morgan recessed the Planning Commission, opened the public hearing, and asked Mix to present his request.

Mix distributed a document about the proposed dog park (see attached.) Mix said they would like to construct a first-class dog park. He noted it will be completely fenced in and will have a key card-entrance. He said they will make sure all of the dogs that use the park will be treated.

Mix continued and noted the park will be handicapped-accessible and will be named Veterans Memorial Dog Park. He said they will have a part-time attendant, and they will be good neighbors. He said there should not be a lot of barking. Mix noted they will have on-site well and septic, and the project will be financed philanthropically.

McManus noted a park is allowed as a by-right use in the LDR zoning district. He noted the focus of a site plan review is to look at the plans and verify that all aspects of the ordinance are complied with. He said the Planning Commission could have stipulations with an approval.

Morgan asked if anyone wished to speak in favor of the request.

Chris Geisert noted the current park location is a mud pit, and he said this park will be a top-of-the-line park. He said the pole barn will become a training facility. He said the park will have handicapped access, and there will be solar lighting on the walkways.

Leslie Sitzer noted this park will have a better design. She said the park in town is not handicapped-accessible.

Jim Brown commented on the world class design and noted the park will become another destination location.

Morgan asked is anyone was opposed.

Ron Lepard was concerned about the possibility of loose dogs running onto his property or into the neighborhood. He asked that a limit to the hours of operation be considered and he suggested daylight hours. He noted the woods have poison ivy in it.

Del Newton, who owns a nearby farm, was concerned about dogs getting out and attacking livestock. He asked if the park had insurance. He questioned if there was enough parking if an event were to be held there. He asked that there be no parking on the public road and asked if any no parking signs would be installed.

Mix rebutted by saying the park will be safer than general public ownership of dogs. He said the fences will be 6 ft high and double-fenced. He said each entry into the park will be a double-door entry. He noted they are fully insured, and they will have lots of parking. He said they have room on the property for overflow parking. He noted they would have a time limit in the winter until 8 p.m. He said dogs will be required to be leashed as they enter and exit the park.

Geisert noted leashes will be required, and they are insured. He said each gate will be a gravity gate that will automatically shut to help control the dogs.

Morgan closed the public hearing and reconvened the Planning Commission.

LaForge asked about barriers. Mix said they would plant trees between the fence and the property lines. LaForge noted this is a sizable project. He asked what percentage of funding would need to be in hand before the project begins. Mix noted the fencing and parking areas will be completed first, and the park will be completed in phases.

LaForge asked how long it will take to complete. Mix said a couple of years.

Snow noted a dumpster was not included on the plans. She asked about bathrooms. Mix said there will be real bathrooms. He noted the architectural drawings have not been finished.

Snow asked about the hours of operation. Mix said

Saturdays will be 9-dark or 8 in winter
Sundays will be 9-dark or 8 in winter
and normal weekday hours.

Snow asked if people could go to the park without a dog. Mix said yes.

Morgan asked how large the property was. Mix said 20 acres.

Geiger noted the park is a good concept, but he was concerned about the consequences of success and will it get too big.

Geiger asked what the vision of the park was. Mix said it will be used to bring people together.

Geiger asked why they used an out-of-state architect. Mix said she had completed other dog parks.

Geiger asked if the pond water would be potable. Mix said yes.

Geiger questioned how that would be done since it is not shown on the drawings. Mix said the ponds will be the final phase and the formal plans are not done yet.

Geiger asked if the proposed obstacle course would be a competition-level attraction. Mix said yes.

Geiger questioned the proposed competitions, concessions, and vendors.

Geiger asked McManus about the training and events. McManus said those proposals need to be treated separately as they would have to be approved as a special use.

Geiger asked if the park could be approved without the dog events. McManus said yes.

Vanderboegh expressed concern about the total cost of the project and suggested funding be verified for each phase. He would like to see cost estimates for each phase. He questioned the budgeting process and asked if monies were being allocated for maintenance of the trails. Mix said he needs an approval in order to be able to raise funds.

Vanderboegh asked if each area would be fenced. Mix said yes.

Vanderboegh asked who would issue the cards to get into the park. Mix said individuals would have to prove the dogs had their shots and a fecal exam. He said there will be a kiosk and public hours to obtain an access card.

Vanderboegh asked if there would be an entry fee. Mix said the obtaining a card allows access.

Mix noted many dog owners who go out of town carry their papers with them.

Vanderboegh verified that there were no architectural drawings. Mix agreed.

Vanderboegh asked about the wooded area between the park and the neighborhood. Mix said they were planning on retaining the trees.

Morgan asked about the lighting. Mix said they would have small solar-powered lights on the paths. He said people will need flashlights or headlamps at night.

Morgan asked about dog waste. Mix said it would be composted or taken away.

Morgan asked about trespassers. Mix said they will have motion detectors and infrared cameras.

Nadwornik was concerned about the parking capacity for events and training. Mix said the fence could open to expand parking.

Miner verified that training and events are not automatically allowed. McManus agreed.

Miner asked if there would be a sign. Mix said yes.

Miner asked if there would be any dog boarding such as a kennel. Mix said no.

Miner asked about the parking. Mix said there were 61 spaces.

Miner asked what the parking surface would be. Mix said asphalt.

Miner asked how large the events would be. Mix said there would be less than 300 people at the events.

Morgan noted there was a new dog park in Battle Creek that is very well used.

Geiger questioned if the use was truly a park. He noted paperwork is required to get a key pass and vaccinations are needed. He said there was a fee to use the park. He said it may be a different type of business.

Geiger asked about staff and said it seems like it is more of a club. He said he thinks it should be more of a public facility.

LaForge asked if there were any fees to go to the park if you did not have a dog. Mix said no.

Geisert noted many parks charge fees to use the facilities and cited River Oaks Park in Kalamazoo. He noted they have many volunteers to help with the park.

Snow asked about an 8 ft fence. McManus noted they are limited to a 6 ft fence.

Miner asked about the septic. Mix said it would be near the barn.

Miner asked about the (7) special areas on the drawing. Mix said those are in the woods and they are plans for disabled or elderly people to sit.

Miner asked about the pagodas. Mix said they are sheltered areas to get out of the sun.

Miner asked about the sheds. Mix said they are for tools and supplies.

Miner was concerned about water surface control.

Miner asked about the bleachers. Mix said they are there as a potential for events.

Miner asked about the vendor sites. Mix said they are areas for pop-up tents and noted they are not permanent locations.

Miner asked about the existing pole barn. Mix said they would like it to be a training center.

Miner asked about insect control. Mix said it would all be organic.

Miner asked about odor control. Mix said trash will be removed every day.

Vanderboegh asked if there was an umbrella organization. Mix said they have a non-profit set up.

Vanderboegh asked if any event profits would go to maintaining the park. Mix agreed.

Geiger said he is struggling with the idea that it is a park in name only and that it is more of a commercial operation. He said charging a fee is an issue.

McManus noted a park can be managed by a public or private organization and there are no provisions against charging a fee. He said a concept of a park can be reviewed, but he said the idea of a training center or holding events are separate and need special permits. He suggested a concept approval could be done subject to a review of architectural plans and that no training or events be held until appropriate permits are obtained.

Geiger said he did not want to approve a park and leave them in a position to fail. He suggested they submit a statement of purpose and explain how they are not a business. He was concerned they would not be a success without the other aspects of the business.

Vanderboegh noted the Planning Commission cannot ensure success.

LaForge noted they cannot tell someone they cannot apply for other permits.

Motion by LaForge to approve Case No. PR-3-2020 as a concept of a park to allow parking and fencing and a phased development with a stipulation that permanent features will not be approved until formal architectural plans are approved. Support by Vanderboegh.

Roll call vote taken: 6 ayes – LaForge, Miner, Morgan, Nadwornik, Snow, Vanderboegh - 1 nay – Geiger - motion carried. Site Plan Approved with Stipulation.

Public Comment

Hoot Gibson noted he was the Commissioner for the area and was present to keep up with the issues in his area.

Motion by Geiger to adjourn. Support by LaForge. All ayes - motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce Snow".

Joyce Snow, Secretary