
SYCAMORE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2022

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Bill Davey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and City Clerk Mary Kalk called the roll. Those Commissioners present were Ted Strack, Chuck Stowe, Matt Woodstrup, Nancy Copple, Dave Finney, Nate Kitterman, Eli Hamingson, Rachel Sauber, and Nathan Schwartz. Commissioners Stephen Nelson and Alan Zantout were absent. Others present were City Manager Michael Hall, City Attorney Keith Foster, Director of Community Development John Sauter, and City Engineer Mark Bushnell.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion- Commissioner Schwartz moved to approve the agenda and Commissioner Finney seconded the motion.

Voice Vote Chairperson Davey called for a voice vote to approve the motion. All Commissioners present voted aye. Motion carried 10- 0.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Meeting of January 10, 2022.

Motion- Commissioner Strack moved to approve the Minutes of the January 10, 2022 meeting and Commissioner Kitterman seconded the motion.

Voice Vote Chairperson Davey called for a voice vote to approve the motion. All Commissioners present voted aye. Motion carried 10- 0.

AUDIENCE TO VISITORS

WORKSHOPS

NEW BUSINESS / ACTION ITEMS

- A. **Consideration of a request by Shannon Lovett, representative for Lovett’s Towing & Recovery, for a Special Use Permit to operate a Towing Service, With On-Site Vehicle Impoundment as required by Article 5.3.1.L of the Sycamore Unified Development Ordinance at 531 East Sycamore Street in the City of Sycamore, Illinois, PIN number 06-33-152-029.**

Chairperson Davey read a letter (herein) submitted from “The Taylors”

During the Public Hearing, the following residents spoke after the letter, herein, was read.

Tamara Alton, 505 E. Sycamore Street, is concerned about the flooding, being in a flood plain, water going to her land, not being able to get out of the flood zone, and dealing with the repossession part of the business. She said that she is ok with the towing but is not ok with the repossession.

Brian Duffy, 402 E. Sycamore Street, said they moved in when Accurate Towing was there but now it’s been nice not having to worry about the kids. He’s concerned about the speeding issue they have on their street. He said that he has no problem with the towing but has a big problem with the repossession and semi-truck wreckers that Lovett’s owns and operates.

Donna Siegmeier, Sabin and E. Sycamore Street, is concerned about the traffic, loud trucks, and depreciating property value. She begged to have a “Children at Play” sign posted. They already have the jail on their side of town and don’t want a tow yard. She asked if they would like to have a towing company two houses down from their house.

Daniel Berry, Warrenville, owner of 421 E. Sycamore Street, is concerned that the grading has already been changed affecting him with flooding issues. His problem is in regard to his grandchild and the other children playing and the angry people going

to the impound lot in the middle of the night. He is also concerned about the noise and the streets being affected by the big trucks.

Aaron Berry, 421 E. Sycamore Street, is concerned about the property values, his child and future kids, and the impound lot with traffic and angry people mistakenly pounding on their door thinking they are the towing service.

Andrew Bjornson, owner of Caliber Towing and three other towing companies, here representing the Davis and Spears families, gave a handout and is concerned about the flooding and the HAZMAT concerns for all the residents with the oil residue, the flood insurance, that the fence that was supposed to be put up in the front, that they changed the grading, that they moved the existing fence back approximately 75 feet into the residential zoning, and that the six-foot fence is actually an eight-foot fence with one-foot of barbed-wire. He asked if stipulations could be put in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for how long cars can stay and the maximum number of cars that can stay.

Gail Roloff, 415 East Sycamore Street, asked, based on the reviews, what guarantees that Lovett's will be a good neighbor.

Jeff Taylor, 331 E. Sycamore Street, asked if the vehicles involved in fatalities are covered when transporting and if they are placed in a building where they can't be seen. He is concerned about the children that are out playing from dawn to dusk. He doesn't want it there. He also asked if there could be a police presence at night for when people come to retrieve their cars.

Tom Guthry, 131 E. Maplewood Street, asked about doing relocation in the City of Sycamore.

Corey Arndt, 412 E. Sycamore Street, asked the amount of police tows for the City of Sycamore and asked if they are measured and if not, wants them measured. He later noted that a realistic number of tows is 200-300 or less than one per day.

Katrina Taylor asked if neighbors can write in or sign a petition or email and was confirmed yes, to send letters to the alderpersons or present at the next City Council meeting on July 5, 2022.

City Manager Michael Hall said that the code requires a Special Use permit in this zoning. It was compliant and given to Accurate Towing but it goes with the owner so this is why it is coming back again after being sold to Lovett's. Regarding the petitioner adding of the new gravel surface to the flood plain, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) requires compensatory storage. For any other issues, the petitioner is present and will answer any questions.

City Engineer Mark Bushnell said that the property is located in a flood plain and that it is FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) who determines who is and who is not located in a flood plain. He said that his office could assist residents requesting to be removed from a flood plain, although FEMA makes that ultimate decision. The owner is required, if approved for the Special Use by the PZC and the City Council, to take out 110% of what he filled or lose the Special Use permit and the ability to use the property for the intended use.

Commissioner Finney asked if this is also a repossession service or a Special Use for towing.

Community Director John Sauter said that the Special Use doesn't differentiate between the two as it is for a towing service with on-site vehicle storage.

Shannon Lovett, 3000 North First Street, DeKalb, petitioner, responding to the inquiries, said that they monitor their drivers with annual driving records and said they have flawless records. Illinois requires a repossession license and they do not have one so they do no plan on doing that in Sycamore nor do they plan on doing relocation, either. For impound, they will have restricted hours for people claiming their vehicles and will have signage with hours on the property. Regarding property values, he hopes that by removing the old buildings putting it back to grass, it will add to the value. They plan on quite a bit of cosmetic work to the main building with a new parking lot and new asphalt. The old tenant ran the entire company out of that facility with all the drivers and employees. They plan on dispatching out of the DeKalb facility. The cars would be towed and dropped in Sycamore which will have only be one office staff member. This will reduce the truck traffic rate by 90%. Regarding the flooding, they are working with Wendler Engineering Services and have spoken with city officials about putting in retention in the green space to help control any flooding. Regarding semi tow trucks, he said that they are restricted from using that yard

for any large vehicles. Semi's always go to the ten-acre DeKalb impound lot and they have no intentions in bringing heavy equipment over to Sycamore. The tows for Sycamore Police Department are required to stay in Sycamore but do allow them to move the large vehicles to DeKalb. They do 90% of fatalities in DeKalb County but those vehicles are stored inside the building so the investigations can be done. Hours of business will be Monday – Friday 8 am to 5 pm and half day on Saturday with one staff member, however, towing is 24/7 so there will be times when a tow truck will arrive in the night, put the car in the yard and leave. The fencing does have slats, considered 90%, so can still see through it. He can have that conversation if the neighbors would like more screening. They have a very high-tech camera system with 23 cameras in DeKalb and are putting a system in Sycamore with 18-20 cameras. He said the majority of tows are collisions and the amount of angry people is a small percentage.

Commissioner Schwartz said that he likes that the wreckers will not be parked there and agrees that it should reduce the amount of traffic but asked how many times a tow will happen each day.

Shannon Lovett said, although he doesn't have the numbers with him, he guessed it will be 1-2 cars every 2-3 days. Regarding the preferred route, he said they stay off Sabin Street as much as possible and have been using Walnut Street off of Route 64. They are a four-generation company that's been in business over 40 years. They strive every day to do the best with the community and customers. Regarding the fence, the fence company requested they leave the old posts in the ground move the new posts out a foot all the way around. Cars are not covered during transportation, but the vehicles involved in fatalities are stored in the building in order to do the crash investigation. They plan on blacktopping the lot and they already planned on retention.

Community Development Director John Sauter said, for clarification, the tow policy is managed by the Police Department. According to the Police Chief, the way it was set up when the former tenant was there, was that they had to be within the city's corporate limits in order to tow for the City of Sycamore. When they left, they increased it 2.5 miles from the intersection of State and Main Streets. The former tenant was going to go to an alternate site, which did not work out, which left the city with no towing capabilities. Right now, that policy is on hold so the police department can use any vehicle towing company right now for the City of Sycamore. Regarding the fence, it is a code compliant fence as the fence can be eight foot in an M-1 zoning and can also have barbed wire. He said it may be the cart before the horse, but he applied for a permit and a permit was granted as there was no reason not to. He will look into if the fence was moved 25 feet and into residential area. Mr. Lovett did put gravel in the lot and did not have city approval to do so. It's in a flood plain and said in laymen's terms, if the lot is raised, the same amount must be removed but up to 110% creating compensatory storage. They met with Mr. Lovett at the site to explain that he needs a permit and engineering. As far as the Special Use, it was written with two conditions. He must first submit plans for compensatory storage by August 1, 2022 and work needs to be complete by October 1, 2022. If granted and does not meet this, the Special Use permit will be revoked. The second condition is that semis cannot be towed there if the permit is granted. Stipulations about the policy can be brought to the Police Chief but clarified that the UDO talks about what uses are permitted and what uses are not.

Commissioner Strack said that he has known the Lovett family for 30 + years from both a personal and business prospective. They take great care of their equipment and he has the utmost respect for the Lovett's.

Commissioner Kitterman asked when the previous Special Use permit was granted for what appears to be exactly the same thing.

Director John Sauter said that it was granted in 2019 and that it is his understanding that they were operating there prior.

Commissioner Nathan Schwartz suggested that if this is approved by the Council, that staff talks to the owner about doing appropriate signage, so residents are not mistaken for the business. He also suggested addressing a preferred route to the business.

Commissioner Woodstrup confirmed that no cars will be stored outside of the fence.

Motion

Commissioner Strack moved to forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council and Commissioner Finney seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote Chairperson Davey called for a roll call vote to approve the motion. Commissioners Strack, Stowe, Woodstrup, Finney, Hamingson, Schwartz, and Chairperson Davey voted aye. Commissioners Copple, Kitterman, and Sauber voted nay. Motion carried 7-3.

- B. **Consideration of a Request from Kaylin Matekaitis for a Special Use Permit to operate a Tattoo Parlor/Body Art Establishment (First Floor) as required by Article 5.3.1.H of the Sycamore Unified Development Ordinance at 215 West Elm Street (also known as 140 Somonauk Street, Suite 101) in the City of Sycamore, Illinois, PIN number 06-32-259-012.**

Commissioner Sauber confirmed that her business is by appointment only.

Motion

Commissioner Kitterman moved to forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council and Commissioner Sauber seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote Chairperson Davey called for a roll call vote to approve the motion. Commissioners Strack, Stowe, Woodstrup, Copple, Finney, Kitterman, Hamingson, Sauber, Schwartz, and Chairperson Davey voted aye. Motion carried 10- 0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion

Commissioner Kitterman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. and Commissioner Schwartz seconded the motion.

Voice Vote Chairperson Davey called for a voice vote to approve the motion. All Commissioners present voted aye. Motion carried 10- 0.

Approve:

Chairperson – William D. Davey

Attest:

Mary Kalk, City Clerk

June 13, 2022

Regarding Public Hearing on 531 East Sycamore Street

Dear community members and city council,

My husband and I are here to express our concerns regarding the proposed towing and repo lot at the end of East Sycamore Street. My primary concern is the increased traffic for our small neighborhood.

I can easily count 15 children under 10 years old who enjoy playing outside, riding their bikes and scooters around, and generally being young, playful kids. As parents and neighbors, we as a community, keep an eye out for these neighborhood kids when we are coming and going. If we are to have increased daily traffic at all hours of the day, by strangers to our neighborhood, can you guarantee they will follow the speed limit and watch out for our children?

I can tell you already that drivers speed too much down our residential street to use as a shortcut around Route 64. There is additional concern by our entire Sycamore community who use the new, lovely walking path off Page Street. We have increased foot and bike traffic from community members of all ages who use the new path and our neighborhood sidewalks daily.

In Summary, I cannot see any positive outcome for our neighborhood by permitting the new owners to operate a towing service and repo lot next door.

Thank you for your time, The Taylors.