

RAVENNA TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

JEFF GAYNOR, CHAIRMAN, REMY ARNESS
GARY LONG, DOROTHY GRIFFITHS, AND CLAIRE MOORE

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The Ravenna Township Board of Zoning Appeals met April 22, 2015 at 7:00p.m. at the Ravenna Township Trustee Meeting Room at 6115 S. Spring St., Ravenna, Ohio 44266.

Chairman, Jeff Gaynor brought the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Roll call was made with board members present: Jeff Gaynor, Remy Arness, Dorothy Griffith, Gary Long, Claire Moore, and Carolyn Chambers, Zoning Secretary. Jim DiPaola, Zoning Inspector, was absent. Thank you, the record will show that we have a quorum.

Jeff: We are meeting to discuss Variance request 2015 BZA 02, from the Happy Trails Animal Sanctuary, is there a representative here? Thank you would you step forward please. I'd like to remind all of the folks that any comments you have must be recorded and must be A. after you are sworn in and B. in this location so the microphone will pick you up. Things coming from the back of the room will not be part of the record. Thank you. Do you swear that the statements you are about to make are the truth?

Yes.

Jeff: Would you state your name and address please.

Annette: My name is Annette Fisher, I live at 5280 Hayes Road in Ravenna.

Jeff: Thank you. The nature of your request for the Board this evening?

Annette: I am the founder, Director of Happy Trails Animal Sanctuary and we have purchased property that butts up to our current facility and we are asking for a variance so that we can use the house as an educational facility where we can have some classes on animal health, animal care, and have some of our Veterinarians come in and teach not only our staff, but any member of our community that would like to come in and learn from it.

Jeff: What sort of numbers of students and teachers might you expect?

Annette: We will go by whatever the building department, we invited them as well as the fire department came out already and we are in the process of finding out whatever they would allow us to and they have not given that figure yet.

Jeff: Did you write the narrative?

Annette: I did

Jeff: It was clear and concise, we don't always get that. Any discussion, comments from the rest of the board?

Gary: I understand you are going to have your offices there also.

Annette: We are hoping to have two of them, two of the rooms where we can have two of our staff members operate out of there with a desk and a computer and make phone calls and that type of thing. It not necessary that they have meeting or anything, but just an extra space for our staff to operate out of.

Jeff: For the map here, there is another property in between the property that we are speaking of this evening, which is 5661 and your property, is that accurate?

Annette: Yes, sir

Jeff: Is there a building or residence on that property?

Annette: Yes, those are our neighbors, Bruce and Ann Broecker. There are not here.

Jeff: They are not here? Ok, the rest of the property is used how. Are you going to make pasture and etc and fence in some of it?

Annette: We are hoping to fence it in and use for horse pasture.

Jeff: What is its use currently?

Annette: There is absolutely nothing, it is open.

Jeff: You'll be making some more parking at the house here is that what this is?

Annette: In the front, yes, where there would be gravel and allow for additional parking and it's on the side of the driveway that is not the septic, the septic is on the center of the yard.

Jeff: We have a small out building here 24x24 garage currently.

Annette: Yes, it's a cement garage type of building.

Jeff: So you said the fire department has been out?

Annette: Yes, they have been out and went through the house with us and gave us the steps that we need to go through with the building department and we are going through the steps with them to make sure everything meets whatever their standards are.

Jeff: Sounds like you are going about this the right way. Comments, questions? Doesn't seem like it would be intrusive, you're not planning classes with 60 or 80 people.

Annette: No

Jeff: Does anyone else wish to speak on this matter?

I do

Jeff: Would you step back please and remember that you are under oath. Do you swear that the statements that you are about to make before this board are the truth?

I do

Jeff: Would you state your name and address for the record please.

My name is Anita Carr, I live at 5693 New Milford Rd.

Jeff: And the nature of your comments this evening?

Anita: I have several questions. I have concerns about the fencing if the fencing is going to be electric, we have Grandkids, we have our own animals and the fencing is going to be up against our property where our dog goes and that concerns me. I don't want pigs, I don't want anything else over there, I don't mind the horses, I don't mind the animal sanctuary farm, that is not my issue. I just want to make sure that we are not going to run into problems with it. The manure smell, we sit out in our back all the time.

Jeff: Point out to me on the map please where you live.

Anita: 5693, we are here. (points to the map and explains her Mother-in-laws property and how they butt up against each other) I have concerns, because I don't want to lose our property value, where they are at now for a residential area a office and a school kind of defeats the purpose of living in a residential area. How much traffic are we going to

get from this school, what are the hours of the office going to be, if there are going to be veterans there are they going to be in and out all the time of the day or night, because she is out early. My Mother-in-law is a light sleeper and her bedroom is on that side. My husband and my sons and his sons they all shoot clays on the weekends on our property, I don't want that to be an issue either.

Jeff: Did you say shoot clays?

Anita: Shoot clays, the things up in the air.

Jeff: You actually have room for trap shooting?

Anita: Are more structures going to go up on the back part of the property? I took some pictures.

Jeff: This application does not request more buildings at this point. The fence, as long as the fence is a proper distance from the property lines.

Anita: I just don't want my dog or Grandkids getting zapped by an electric fence. I am thrilled that my Grandkids are going to be able to see livestock and animals up close. I really am, but there are some issues. These are the pictures that I took. (passes her cell phone with the pictures on them explaining the areas)

Jeff: Thank you, if you would, take your seat again please, we will address these issues. Will you step forward again please? The fencing that you have shown here on this map, can you tell me what type of fence you would expect that to be?

Annette: We do intend it to be a wood post with a field fence against it and we do intend to run electric across the top so that we could be good neighbors. We have draft horses and if the horses were to get out onto a road or cause an accident or into other people's yards, we are responsible for us to keep the animals contained on the property that we own as to opposed to let them run lose.

Jeff: The electric is going to be 4, 5 or 6 feet up?

Annette: Yes, but the fence is going to be a minimum of 4 to 5 feet up

Jeff: What type of animals would you expect to be?

Annette: Horses

Jeff: Just horses here, what others do you have on your other property?

Annette: On the other property are all farm animal rescue, so we have anything that is a farm animal from abuse or neglect we have everything from sheep and goats, we have some poultry, we do have pigs and we have horses as well.

Jeff: How long have you been doing this at this location?

Annette: 16 years

Jeff: As far as the school visits from vets etc. what sort of hours might you expect to operate?

Annette: Right now we are setting up horse education classes, there are going to be six of those classes on every other Thursday night from 7:00 to 8:30 for an hour and a half.

Jeff: We are looking at how many people?

Annette: I'm going to guess they might allow 20 to 25 people.

Jeff: You might get a little bit of traffic here. There is a good bid of traffic on New Milford Road now.

Gary: Are you doing that now?

Annette: Yes, we are actually doing all this on our property now as well as tours, we bring in people from other states, we have tours on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, which is seasonal it goes from May to the end of October. They are six different time slots on

Friday, Saturday and Sunday up to six people per tour group and we also have local schools come through for educational visits. We have brought in a college was there today with 25 people doing a vet tech program so we have educational programs all the time.

Jeff: Your current parking lot is gravel?

Annette: Yes

Jeff: You know that the zoning restrictions on parking lots require them to be dustless, they can't be mud.

Annette: Ours are all gravel, you are welcome to come out and see them.

Jeff: Questions?

Gary: How much traffic do you have? What is the maximum amount of cars that you have today without this expansion of property what you have on average?

Annette: What we have over there, we have room for like, when we have volunteers on Saturdays, we probably have about 20 to 25 cars

Gary: Today?

Annette: Today

Gary: Do you anticipate increasing that now?

Annette: If we were able to have other cars park at the other place what were planning on doing was expanding the driveway so there could be room for parking because the people that would be coming up to the house there really was no parking there what so ever. There is just a driveway going into the garage.

Jeff: My wife spoke highly of you folks. She is a reference librarian and pretty much knows everything.

Gary: This new fenced in area, you say that you have other animals there. Your plans are to primarily have horses in there?

Annette: Yes, and what was interesting is we had already had it fenced in with electric when Mrs. Carr owned it previously we were allowed to use it for two years and she had allowed us to have horses back there and electric fence at the time.

Gary: Other animals, are you planning on having any of the other animals in there?

Annette: No, we need the space for horses. We have other property that we also purchased across the street if we need to use for other animals we would apply for that at that time, but we haven't got that far yet.

Gary: That's on the other side of New Milford?

Annette: Yes, sir

Remy: Are you getting any complaints now of noise or odors?

Annette: No, most of the neighbors are involved in Happy Trails in some way or other. They either come over and volunteer or they participate in the events. The neighbors across the street have offered parking at their place if we need it as well as the neighbors to the left of us and we are friends with the neighbors on the right, they have sent their kids over, we give them straw for their dogs. We haven't had any neighborhood complaints as far as I'm aware of.

Claire: Have you had any animals get lose?

Annette: We have, I think sometimes that comes with it. We haven't had the happen for quite a while. Early on when we first started we didn't have the proper fencing and we didn't have electric up and at the time we did have a couple pigs get lose at one point and

we were able to get them very quickly and get them back in the pen where they needed to be. One was faster than I was.

Remy: Do you plan to merge these properties at some point?

Annette: Where they butt up together the property that we are currently on is mostly blighted which is why we were excited to get this property, because it is pasture for the horses and they actually would have grass to graze in now, where our woods is it doesn't have any grass.

Gary: Do you have a maximum in mind of how many horse you are going to have in that fenced in area?

Annette: We try not to over crowd when you have a pasture, because you can actually rotate the pastures. I would guess in each pasture, possibly 3 to 4 horses. We are looking at a total of about 4 acres behind the house that we had fenced in, in the past and that is about what we had there before.

Jeff: Ok, it doesn't look like things are changing a great deal, other than you are going to be using this house up front a little more. That depends on what the fire department tells you what you can do with it as you have mentioned. Any other questions or comments?

Gary: The 24x24 barn or out building. Is that going to be for animals or is it going to be for grain storage, what are you going to use that for?

Annette: We were considering using it for an isolation area like if we have an animal that might have been neutered that needs a few days or a week of recovery to put in there.

Right now it is all cement floor, there is no opening in the back it would really need a lot of restructuring in order for us to use it for an animal. It's something we are considering, but after we really looked at the structure we're probably not going to use it for that anytime soon and if we do we can reapply or ask, but if we did it wouldn't be to house animals permanently it would be like a recovery area and so whatever it was neutered, gelded and needed a week or so to recover before we could put it with the other animals we would use it as isolation.

Gary: Are you going to have utilities in there?

Annette: In that barn, no. There is electric, but there is no running water or anything like that in there.

Gary: Is it heated?

Annette: It is not heated.

Jeff: Would you excuse me again this lady would like to comment again.

Anita: I missed one thing on my list. What happens when all these animals come to the end of their life a lot of them are already buried behind the sanctuary farm. There's a pretty good size pet cemetery back there and I don't want coming any closer either. It may seem to you like there is not a bunch of changes here. Maybe there not, but they are coming closer to us and I'm concerned about our property value.

Annette: I would be glad to address that. We have not used the pet cemetery to bury anything for approximately a year or to a year and a half. We have just had in the past three weeks unfortunately several rescues that we did and we lost three horses in a row. They were all hauled away by either Tom Sprague or I forget the other guy's name. We use dead animal removal pickup and they came and they hauled the horses and we actually have another horse scheduled to be euthanized tomorrow and Tom Sprague is coming to haul it away and they take them to a, we call it a burial site, but it is basically a land fill.

Jeff: Not a glue factory?

Annette: I hope not.

Gary: So your intentions is not to use any of the property for burial at this point.

Annette: Not the new property. We have pretty much filled up what we have. When we were approved by the EPA they did come out and they explained to us, because we followed all their rules and regulations, everything was buried on flat ground you could not bury on the side of the hill, you could not bury on a water shed. The horses had to be dug 20 feet down with 4 feet allowed for the horse and 6 feet allowed for ground cover. So we went over all the rules and regulations with them and we made sure we followed everything.

Jeff: Ok, thank you. Anyone else care to ask question or comments from the audience?

The Chair will entertain a motion pertaining to 2015 BZA 02.

Gary moved that we grant this Variance request number 2015 BZA 02 for Happy Trails Animal Sanctuary as requested.

Dorothy second it.

R/C: Claire Moore – yes, Gary Long – yes, Dorothy Griffith – yes, Remy Arness – yes, and Jeff Gaynor – yes.

Jeff: Your request has been granted. Interested parties have a time period during which they can make appeals in court to this request. Other than that we have a little bit of board business we have to attend to, you may stay or leave, whatever suits.

Jeff: We need to approve the minutes from the April 8, 2015 meeting as presented to us.

Do I have a motion to do so?

Claire: I so move

Gary: I second it.

R/C: Gary Long – yes, Claire Moore – yes, Remy Arness – yes, Dorothy Griffith – yes, and Jeff Gaynor – yes.

Remy: Made a motion to adjourn at 7:30

Respectfully submitted by

Carolyn Chambers
Zoning Secretary

CC: Trustees (3)
BZA (5)
Zoning Inspector
File