



Photo by Linda Gallagher

Torch River RV park developer Jim Brewer has submitted a proposal for a smaller 70-site RV park on his 10 acres of property adjacent to Torch River Marine while appealing the Milton Township Planning Commission's denial of the original 80-site proposal.

RV park developers submit new site plan proposal, appeal denied proposal

BY LINDA GALLAGHER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

TORCH RIVER — Developers of a proposed RV park have submitted a new site plan proposal for a smaller park to the Milton Township Planning Commission, while appealing the original proposal.

Property owner Jim Brew-

er filled out an application for a new special use permit with 70 RV sites on a 10-acre piece of property located between Torch River Road and Miller Road, immediately west of Torch River Marine in early October, records show.

The proposed RV park is adjacent to a large 290-acre parcel sold to the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy last year by the same trust that sold the 10-acre piece to Brewer in 2017.

Brewer applied for the original special use permit in 2020 that if approved would have allowed for 80 camping sites on the property. The Planning Commission denied that application in July after almost a year of deliberation.

In its denial of the site plan, the planning commission cited concerns about the park disturbing existing and future uses of the vicinity and community; inadequate fire protection, as well as further environmental concerns regarding erosion, and the park's lack of compliance with existing zoning in the area.

Brewer appealed that decision in Antrim County's 13th Circuit Court in August, arguing through his attorney that the denial violated township ordinances, state law, and the U.S. Constitution, stating that the denial was too vague, followed improper procedures and attempted to impose standards not followed by Milton Township's ordinance.

The Traverse City attorney, Andrew Blodgett, who did not respond to requests for comment, asked Circuit Court Judge Kevin Elsenheimer to reverse the denial or modify

the decision.

Matthew Vermetten, attorney for the Milton Township Planning Commission, denied the allegations, and asked Elsenheimer to dismiss the appeal. Vermetten also failed to respond to requests for comment.

Members of the Planning Commission reached earlier this week said that they had not had an opportunity to see the new RV park application and noted that the application is not on the agenda of the Commission's Nov. 9 meeting.

In the meantime, the state Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, which cited Brewer on Aug. 26 for a violation of the state's erosion and runoff mandates, has ordered the developer to document his efforts to clean up the large amount of sediment that washed onto a neighbor's property after torrential rainstorms in 2020 and submit plans for erosion prevention in the future.

The department received a response with a corrective action plan less than two weeks later. Work to re-seed cleared areas and slow future erosion has been ongoing for several months.

Neighbors have continued to voice widespread opposition to the RV park, despite the proposed reduction in size.

A new group formed by some of those neighbors known as the Torch/Elk/Skegemog Alliance has also entered the legal fray by suing the RV park developers and the Antrim Conservation District, whose soil erosion officer has worked to handle the issues from the start of the project.



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