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Webster board opposes Devils Lake campground

Greg Marsten

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New Webster Village trustee Aaron Sears was sworn-in by village clerk Debra Doriott-Kuhnly last Week.

The Webster Village Board voted unanimously to pen a letter of opposition against a proposed conditional use permit (CUP) application for a 60-unit campground that lies north of the village, but within their legal purview. The motion to oppose the proposal came after a lengthy debate and discussion at their regular monthly meeting Wednesday, April 14.

The county CUP application for the campground drew several comments from residents and over 40 minutes of discussion by the board, several of them noting that while they were adamantly opposed to the CUP and proposal in general, they did not want to impose their opinions on neighboring towns.

“I do have a problem with us telling (the Town of) Oakland how to zone their property,” stated trustee Tim Maloney. “I want to make sure we’re not overstepping our bounds.”



Others noted similar concerns, but also pointed out a variety of ways such a camping facility might stress a whole host of conditions in the community, and not just the village, from additional need for law enforcement on top of the basic downsides of more population, more trash, boats, recreational vehicles, noise, pollution and general environmental impacts as well as additional traffic and road wear, run-off and likely future expansion of such a facility, compounding the problems.

“I do hope that 10, 20, maybe 30 years from now, our village’s legacy is protected,” stated trustee Greg Widiker, who said such a facility does not fit into local comprehensive plans. “Now is just not the time ... We need to think ‘big picture.’”

While the proposed campground would not be in the village, the board and village have legal rights to weigh-in, through so-called extraterritorial (ET) zoning laws, which allows municipalities to have some level of authority over land development and use decisions up to 1.5 miles beyond their borders, in adjacent towns.

This is the second time in as many months that Webster has exercised ET zoning, as the Devils Lake CUP application is the second such proposed campground development put forward by Daniel Chelmo but unrelated; Chelmo’s recent 90-stall RV campground CUP application was denied by the county earlier this month.

Chelmo’s Devils Lake campground proposal would involve 60 campsites and would be in both the Town of Meenon and Town of Oakland, north of Webster on the southwest side of Devils Lake, in what is currently RR-1 and A-2 zoning districts. The location is within 1.5-miles of Webster village

limits, meaning it falls under ET zoning rules, allowing input from the village during the CUP application process.

While the Webster board was firmly against the latest Chelmo proposal, they also wondered if the two towns that are affected directly, Oakland and Meenon, would also like to join in their opposition letter.

“I think a letter from all three (municipalities) carries more weight than just extraterritorial zoning,” stated trustee Charlie Weis.

The board will seek possible agreement from the neighboring towns, but will also craft their opposition wording carefully, on assumptions that the CUP application is not the end of a process.



“He’s (Chelmo) going to keep trying,” stated trustee Widiker. “It’s probably going to go to court, I just want to make sure we’ve got proper standing.”

In the end, the board voted unanimously to support the opposition letter.

In other board busyness:

- There was some confusion on whether the board had already approved wage increase for full-time police officers, but after some discussion, they approved a 1.56-percent increase, which is the approximate consumer price index increase.
- Chamber volunteer Harriet Rice presented a few possible designs for replacement ‘Welcome to Webster’ signs, possibly using grants to assist in the cost, estimated at just under \$1,500 total, with installation. The board was all in favor and she will pursue a grant with the village and chamber.

- Harriet Rice also presented some information on the return of Gandy Dancer Days, after a pandemic hiatus last year. They are seeking people who would like to be involved, such as crafters, volunteers for a possible breakfast and other ideas, with the tentative dates set for Aug. 13-15 at the Central Burnett Fairgrounds. Several events and sponsors are already confirmed, like family-friendly events, a run-walk and a dunk tank, with more to come in the next few weeks. “If you have any other ideas, or people who might like to take part, like stilt walkers, maybe a bouncy house, might want to have them get in touch,” Rice said. The board took no formal action on what will be the 23rd annual event, but will work with volunteers to bring it to fruition.
- Village president Jeff Roberts said the water tower repainting project was supposed to start this week, but has been delayed slightly due to cold temperatures. “It will get done,” Roberts said confidently, also assuring that the Webster ‘sunfish’ logo is part of the project.
- Newly elected and reelected board members were sworn-in, although their new terms don’t begin until next week. Current trustee Darrell Sears was unable to attend his last meeting, but Roberts read a letter thanking him for his service, followed by a round of applause from the gallery.
- Roberts joined trustees Maloney and Weis in the swearing-in, also welcoming new trustee Aaron Sears, who will take his seat at the next meeting.
- Jeff Roberts said the fourth annual ‘Fat Fish Forty’ bike race event is on for Saturday, May 1. The 40-plus-mile fat tire and mountain bike race starts and ends in Webster, and has grown in popularity in recent years. “It’s a go!” Roberts said.
- The proposed new village offices and police station project is moving ahead slowly, but Maloney said there are a few details to be resolved with the architects before they can present draft plans, including elevation and setback issues, likely requiring a subcommittee meeting. “There are some issues to be addressed ... but nothing absolutely serious,” Maloney assured.



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