Devils' Lake RV campground proposal denied

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EDITOR

The proposal was for the southwest corner of Devil's Lake

The Burnett County Land Use and Information Committee (LUI) denied a conditional use permit (CUP) for a 60-unit RV campground that local developer Daniel Chelmo had applied for in an area near Devil's Lake, in the towns of Meenon and Oakland.

The committee met on Tuesday, May 4, and offered a lengthy discussion following a public hearing on the proposal, with the committee later voting to deny Chelmo's CUP application for the RV campground, which touted a host of amenities and proposed recreational facilities with a swimming pool, fire pits, visitor center, nature trails and sanitary facilities for campers on the shores of Devil's Lake.

The proposal had drawn criticism and recommendations to deny from all the three associated municipalities, including the towns of Meenon, Oakland and also from the Webster Village Board in recent weeks, which proved to be one of the primary factors cited by supervisors in their denial votes.

Fishing in Trade Lake

These gentleman were enjoying some evening fishing on the Trade Lake bridge after opening weekend.

KAYLA CASEY | SENTINEL

CAMPGROUND: 60-unit RV park permit considered

The comments against the proposal mentioned a host of issues of concern from neighbors or nearby residents, ranging from stormwater drainage to fencing, security and noise, among other issues.

Over a dozen people spoke against the proposal, and while Chelmo offered up a host of positives he believes the campground proposal would bring, he also noted that the property was currently used agriculturally, and had been for decades, and that it had created a sort of 'mono-culture,' and that the RV campground was, in effect, reversing that trend and restoring the land, somewhat, toward its original "Northwoods character."

"We'd actually be converting it back to what it should be," Chelmo stated, citing a plan for 6,000 tree plantings and approximately 200 trees per campsite.

He also disputed concerns on water quality and cited studies showing minimal impact on water from campgrounds, while disputing the infrastructure impact of the 60 RV site, which he said would have the water quality equivalency of just six homes.

"In terms of water quality, I believe the impact (of the RV proposal) is minimal," Chelmo said.

A number of commenters cited past proposals at the property for an even higher-density RV facility, going back to 2019, but the new proposal was, in effect, a response to that denial.

Others looked at Chelmo's proposed privacy screening as a potential eyesore, with one speaker, Sue Hamilton, chiding that it would look like "the Chelmo Correctional Facility."

"It's an unavoidable eyesore," Hamilton added on the proposed 10-foot fencing.

Several supervisors were open to the proposal, and seemed to side with Chelmo's take that it was more in line with "Northwoods character" than a barren, single-crop farm field, while others looked to the suggestions of denial from the neighboring municipalities and the overwhelming number of comments against as reason to deny.

"Once again, Mr. Chelmo is proposing a high-density campground that is in direct conflict with the comprehensive plan," stated Joy Dresel of Danbury, who suggested that that 'modern campgrounds' were really "Just thinly disguised instant villages … with little positive effect on taxes or tourism."

Chelmo also addressed cited concerns on issues of highway access, safety at the entrance and other concerns, even citing a traffic study showing that it was not what people thought.

"The problem is not the number of cars, it's the speed," Chelmo said.

In the end, the LUI Committee moved to deny the CUP application, with several supervisors citing the Meenon, Oakland and Webster objections and concerns, while also noting that the proposal went against local comprehensive plans, with five votes in favor and Supv. Chuck Awe as the only supervisor voting against the denial.