

**MINUTES OF THE BEECHER PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**  
**(THE PZC)**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.**  
**Beecher Village Hall**  
**625 Dixie Highway**

At 7:00 p.m., Chairman Phil Serviss called the meeting to order.

All present joined in the pledge to the flag.

ROLL CALL. Members present: Commissioners Bouchard, Gardner, Heim, Schuitema, Serviss and Weissbohn.

Members absent: Commissioner Hearn.

Staff present: Secretary Patty Meyer, Administrator Bob Barber, Pete Iosue of Teska Associates, President Marcy Meyer and Chief Terry Lemming.

Guests: Trustee Roger Stacey, Trustee Todd Kraus, Ruth Firnhaber, Karen Sheming, Betty McCann, Pam, Erik Gardner, Muataz Abdulla, Gad Alawi and David Harrison.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 26, 2023 MEETING.

Commissioner Heim made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2023 PZC meeting as written. Commissioner Schuitema seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Bouchard, Gardner, Heim, Schuitema, Serviss and Weissbohn.

NAYS: None.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT IN A B-3 DISTRICT FOR A TOBACCO, VAPE AND HOOKAH SHOP AT 997 DIXIE HIGHWAY: BEECHER TOBACCO, INC. The petitioner has presented a formal application, paid the fee and is requesting a hearing for a special use permit for this retail business. It falls under the special use category since this use is not specifically mentioned as a permitted use in the current zoning ordinance and the Zoning Administrator has considered such a use as not prohibited since there are other retail sales of such items in the Village. A copy of the application and memo provided to petitioner regarding procedure was provided in the packet for review. At the workshop there were several questions asked by the Commission and the petitioner asked for time to respond.

Commissioner Bouchard made a motion to open the public hearing at 7:01 p.m. Commissioner Weissbohn seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Bouchard, Gardner, Heim, Schuitema, Serviss and Weissbohn.

NAYS: None.

Motion carried.

Muataz Abdulla introduced himself as proposed partner to the petitioner, Ahmed Dahwal. Mr. Dahwal was in Arizona and his Attorney Samie Ata was ill this evening.

Administrator Barber explained the purpose of tonight's public hearing and Pete Iosue explained the special use permit process.

Commissioner Schuitema asked about breakdown of revenues by product that was requested at the January 26, 2023 meeting. Cousin Gad Alawi has not received that information from their Attorney. He stated that items sold will be cigars, prepackaged regular cigars, tobacco bags and papers, vapes, refillable mod systems, book bags, accessories for tobacco items, section for convenience store items and snacks. Commissioner Gardner asked for sales percentage of each product. Revenue is different depending on store location. They plan to have a little bit of everything, based on demand at Beecher location. Commissioner Schuitema asked again for information to be provided on percentages of sales per product type and liability insurance coverage information.

Mr. Abdulla was asked about other locations he has ownership in: Aurora-Dragon Smoke and Vape; Naperville-Super Smoke; Hickory Hills—not sure of name. In Chicago-Diamond Express and Tasty Spot, both of which also sell tobacco products. Each store has different partners. Smokers Choice on 95<sup>th</sup> Street (under Ahmed Dahwal's cousin-Ahmed is a partner.) Beecher will be only store Muataz Abdulla would partner with Mr. Dahwal. They have not submitted application for FEIN # for the proposed Beecher store.

David Harrison asked what long-term benefit the store would bring to the community and how long other shops have been in operation. It would be a convenience store for the community. Other shops have been in operation more than five years. Minors are not allowed in the shops.

Betty McCann stated that she is all in favor of entrepreneurship, but doesn't feel a smoke shop would benefit Beecher. She doesn't feel it would enhance the community at all.

Karen Sheming doesn't see how it would benefit Beecher, and feels it is a poor choice of another business coming into town.

Chief Terry Lemming, spoke regarding petitioner Ahmed Dahwal and some locations of the businesses he owned. Based on results of a FOIA request from the Hickory Hills Police Department, there were previous police calls at Smoker's Choice, 8601 West 95<sup>th</sup> Street in Hickory Hills for possible selling of "bootleg" cigarettes, suspected drug deal, 17 year old male buying tobacco products, non-closure during Covid restrictions, and search warrant with tubes containing cannabis. FOIA reports do not provide complete information. Copies of FOIA request documents were provided to the PZC for review.

Commissioner Weissbohn stated that when asked at the last meeting, the petitioner stated that police were never called to his store locations.

Administrator Barber stated that petitioner should have been in attendance tonight to provide answers to questions asked over a month ago by PZC. Petitioner's attorney called at 4:25 p.m. today to say he had been ill all week and would not be in attendance.

Administrator Barber suggested PZC continue public hearing on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Abdulla said he

would suggest to petitioner Ahmad Dahwal that either he proceeds with the special use permit request, or he will. He has a clean record.

It was stressed that whoever petitioner is going to be must be present at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> PZC meeting. Mr. Abdulla was not aware of what was requested at last meeting. Next PZC meeting will be March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 p.m. Hearing will be continued and property owners were encouraged to attend.

Commissioner Heim made a motion to continue the public hearing on Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7 p.m. at the Village Hall. Commissioner Schuitema seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Bouchard, Gardner, Heim, Schuitema, Serviss and Weissbohn.

NAYS: None.

Motion carried.

Mr. Abdulla stated that he doesn't want to sign a lease and spend a lot of money if the special use permit approval doesn't seem feasible. Administrator Barber explained process of continuance of public hearing and then request goes to Village Board for their consideration. Mr. Abdulla was encouraged to work with landlord of Beecher Plaza that if special use permit request is not approved, that lease could be voided. Mr. Abdulla will contact Administrator Barber regarding proceeding with special use permit request.

NEW BUSINESS. The PZC will be hearing from Art VanBaren on March 23<sup>rd</sup> regarding Phase 1 plat for one lot, five acres on Church Road side, a proposed 100,000 sf building. ComEd won't run power unless Mr. VanBaren pays everything upfront. ComEd won't even give an estimate. Business plan for industrial park will be changed, probably one or two lots at a time.

Administrator Barber reported that the School District is entering in an agreement for a solar farm at Racine and Miller. School would retain ownership of the land. It will be a state incentivized project. Village will get some cash out of the deal.

Administrator Barber reported that grain elevator has been sold to a farmer for personal use; police station design is moving along; Penfield Street bridge will be closed near end of March. Most of Penfield Street construction will occur during summer; the 500 block of Gould Street will be resurfaced, and also considering resurfacing of 600 block of Gould.

Administrator Barber reported that the Village Board is using ARPA funds from Federal government to improve parks and recreation in the Village by lighting the walking path, a new footbridge, adding benches and tables by splashpad and entering an Intergovernmental Agreement with School District for renovation of tennis courts for pickleball, basketball and futsal. Half of Welton Stedt Park will be turned into a soccer field. There will be new park equipment in a few parks, and rubber mulch added.

Two more cameras will be added to beer garden area in Firemen's Park.

Administrator Barber reported on Flock cameras. Chief Lemming explained how Flock cameras have helped with stolen vehicles.

The next regularly scheduled meeting for the PZC is Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT. Commissioner Heim made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Weissbohn seconded the motion.

AYES: Commissioners Bouchard, Gardner, Heim, Schuitema, Serviss and Weissbohn.

NAYS: None.

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patty Meyer".

Patty Meyer  
Secretary