

Board vote blocks Kwik Trip proposal

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Restriction on truck fueling sites within 1,000 feet of I-43 leaves fate of key village parcel in limbo

The Saukville Village Board unanimously approved an ordinance change last week that all but eliminates the possibility of a Kwik Trip on the north side of Highway 33 near I-43.

Officials wrestled with the issue for the better part of a year. The haggling was spurred by plans by Ansay Real Estate Development to build a 5,600-square-foot gas station/convenience store for Kwik Trip on a 15-acre parcel just northwest of the I-43 interchange.

The greatest debate revolved not around the convenience store, but on the related fueling islands and truck traffic they would attract.

Officials were divided over whether developments like the Kwik Trip should be subject to conditional-use review by the Plan Commission, or simply barred.

According to the revised ordinance, which follows a village staff recommendation previously rejected by the Plan Commission, heavy truck fueling is no longer allowed within 1,000 feet of the interstate right-of-way.

That restriction blocks the intended fueling station at the site, making the business venture impractical.

"The decision by the village to amend their language to create a bubble around the interstate corridor in which semi fueling now will not be allowed wasn't the right decision," said Neil Tiziani, general manager of Ansay Real Estate.

"The language as it was written previously would have allowed truck fueling as an opportunity, and we had proposed limiting the parking of trucks to one hour, since it was never our intent to have a truck stop, but rather a place for semis to fuel and go."

Tiziani said the revised ordinance will force semi-truck traffic from I-43 to drive through the entire village to get to a fueling station on the community's west side.

Although the board discussion only dealt with the proposed ordinance change, officials saw it as directly tied to the future of Kwik Trip in the village.

During the ongoing debate, several business owners spoke against any provisions that would allow the development of the Kwik Trip in the village's key commercial district.

Tom Beck, owner of the nearby Beck's Green Bay Ave. Mart, said any action that would clear the way for a Kwik Trip is going to snarl the area with trucks.

"Do you want truck traffic coming into Saukville? You are going to have a heck of a mess if you

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allow them. It is going to be a nightmare at that corner," Beck said.

Tiziani said a traffic engineer prepared a traffic impact analysis on the potential development and determined the road configuration could handle anticipated traffic, including trucks.

"That is the opinion of a third-party expert and the DOT has already signed off on it," Tiziani said.

"How did we get to be the bad guy when we have been looking to locate a business at this site for the past seven years?"

Prior to the board vote, Trustee Mike Krocka said he was not swayed by the traffic analysis commissioned by the developer.

"I don't care what your study says, you are going to create a mess," Krocka said.

Trustee Mike Gielow also worried about the impact the proposed business would have on traffic, especially if large trucks have to maneuver to get to fuel pumps.

"I don't see a diesel fuel station at this site," Gielow said. "I like the idea of putting something in there, but in the next 10 to 20 years we could be creating a real traffic problem."

Disappointed by the vote, Tiziani said the future possibility of a Kwik Trip in the village is in jeopardy.

"I'm not sure what this will mean for the jobs, the tax base and the validation of a real estate market in Saukville – things that Kwik Trip would bring," he said.

"I know Kwik Trip was working with another user to the north of their parcel that would have brought even more value and more jobs to the community and to the interstate corridor. It's unfortunate that all of that could go away.

"This isn't the first time this has happened on our lands in Saukville. In fact, it's not the second time either. It's important for the community to ask its leaders at some point why their interstate corridor has not developed and yet surrounding communities have and continue to do so."