

LYNDEN TOWNSHIP  
STEARNS COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEARING – VARIANCE APPLICATION  
RUFF’S PET RESORT – JUSTIN AND DEONNA BOUSKA  
JUNE 28, 2016

Those present were Supervisors Anne Ackerman, Jerry Finch and Dave Johnson. Clerk Jenny Schmidt was present. Ackerman opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.

The purpose of tonight’s meeting is to consider modification of an existing conditional use permit as a result of a variance application submitted by Ruff’s Pet Resort to increase the number of animals kept on a boarding kennel property. The applicant is requesting an increase to 250 animals. No more than 40 animals are allowed according to Stearns County Zoning Ordinance #439 Section 6.32.1 F.(1) adopted by reference as Lynden Township Ordinance #7. The subject property is ID #19.10313.0015 and described as 10.00 A. W2SE4SW4, Section 9, Township 122, Range 27, with a property address of 1120 County Road 46.

No correspondence was received by the clerk.

Ackerman opened the public hearing and asked the applicant to explain her request for those present. Deonna Bouska explained her business and stated she requested a 250 animal limit on her application but suggested the Board consider the size of animals and staffing vs. a specific number limitation. She explained there are circumstances and events that cannot be planned. She anticipates an expansion would allow for 75-100 dogs on any given night, but that number could increase on busy weekends. This number also does not include animals there for daycare or services. The physical expansion may include an indoor gym and an expansion of units of varying sizes. Bouska also noted a possible expansion could be built around the existing structure and fenced area to further enclose it. The facility is currently and will remain self-contained and meets all the State standards for sanitation disposal.

A meeting was conducted by the Planning Commission on May 10, 2016. They discussed allowing a breakdown between dogs vs. other animals and daycare vs. overnight, but also the need to have a total number limit. The Planning Commission is in favor of the application and recommends approval of the application with three suggested conditions:

- 80 dogs of any size excluding 2 nursing litters
- An additional 40 smaller animals including cats, reptiles, birds, etc. not to exceed 15 pounds
- Animals on the property for grooming would be included in the 80 dog limit

Residents Kent and Sharon Schumaker raised concerns regarding noise. They are able to hear the dogs at times if their windows are left open and with more dogs there may be more noise. Current hours were noted and it was determined that some barking is occurring outside of Ruff’s operating hours thus is attributable to another source.

Resident Don Miller questioned the expansion and when it would take place. Bouska said they are hoping to expand this fall.

Resident Jill Brunner noted concerns about the noise, increased traffic, sanitation disposal and the humane treatment of the animals. She questioned if there will be adequate staffing if the number is raised to 250.

Residents John and Patty Farness were concerned about whether this will have an affect on their property value. Ackerman noted this is in an A-40 district and is a permitted use. For further questions about property values, they need to contact the Stearns County Assessor.

After continued discussion and questions, Ackerman made a motion to close the public hearing at 8:08 p.m., seconded by Finch, all in favor, motion passed.

The Board discussed findings of fact and what might be considered as conditions should the Board approve a variance. No decisions were made at this time. Finch noted concerns about the relationship with the neighbors. Ackerman requested a rough sketch illustrating the existing facility and a proposed expansion if a variance were to be granted. Johnson requested a business plan including future projections and asked Bouska to provide 6 months of data including day/weekly volume, why the animals are on-site (for services/daycare/overnight, etc.), a typical average length of stay, and any seasonal variations. The Board agreed to reconvene on July 11, 2016 at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting. It was noted that at the meeting the Board will exercise their right to an additional 60 days to make a decision on the matter.

Ackerman made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Finch, all in favor, motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jenny Schmidt, Clerk

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Anne Ackerman, Chair