

Monday, December 8,

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The Bainbridge Township Board of Trustees met in special session at the Bainbridge Town Hall on December 8, 2015. Those present were trustees Mrs. Lorrie Sass Benza, Mr. Christopher Horn, and Mr. Jeffrey S. Markley. Fiscal Officer Mrs. Janice S. Sugarman was not in attendance. Mr. Markley presided and called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M.

PRESENTATION by GUEST

Ms. Jennifer Syx introduced her colleague, Jordan Warfield, along with Cris Jones, the representative from Meijer. In response to a question by Mark Murphy of the Board of Zoning Appeals, Ms. Syx explained how her company is working with Bainbridge Township on zoning and redevelopment issues regarding the Geauga Lake property. She asked, "What is Geauga Lake nostalgia?" Mrs. Karen Endres, the Bainbridge Township Zoning Inspector explained that the township is looking for suggestions on how the Meijer store may be able to implement some of this nostalgia into their design to preserve the memory of the historical site.

Mr. Chuck Hesse, President of the Bainbridge Twp. Historical Society, gave a slide presentation to show the history of Geauga Lake. The slide presentation was designed by Mr. Bill Takacs, a Bainbridge resident of over 80 years. Mr. Takacs recorded much of the history of Bainbridge during those years with photographs and videos. Bill Spehn of Cedar Fair also contributed to the presentation. The pictures were from the 1800's and 1900's, showing the old Horse Race Track, Olympic size swimming pool, midget auto race track, Carousel, and the Golden Nugget Arcade, among other buildings. There was also a photo album passed around for the audience to see that included candid photos of people enjoying the park. This photo album was assembled by Mr. Bill Spehn, General Manager of Wild Kingdom. Mr. Todd Lewis, a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals, shared his memories of going to the park over the years and thought that perhaps some of the imagery could be displayed somehow in the store. He discussed the architecture of the buildings and the rides, along with the fashion of the days of boating on the lake, gambling on the horses, and dancing in the ballroom. Ms. Syx said that there are numerous eras of the park that could be incorporated in the nostalgia.

Mr. Cris Jones, the representative from Meijer, gave the history of Meijer, which was founded in 1934 and is now a third generation, family owned business. They currently have 223 stores in six states. The store in Bainbridge will be 192,000 square feet store and will include groceries, clothing, pet, pharmacy, health and beauty, automotive, hunting, garden, electronics, etc. The grocery component is 90,000 square feet. They take a lot of pride in their fresh produce. They own their own dairy and a number of farms. Meijer also owns its own packaging plant and distribution centers in Ohio. This will be a twenty million dollar investment for Meijer to build this store in Bainbridge. Meijer contributes 6% of net income to support local schools and community sports, etc. They have a generic pharmacy program that has excellent participation. Meijer's has a Simply Gift program where they will match funds on a gift card that you purchase that will go to a local food bank. They partner with local food banks to donate expiring produce and dairy products. The property will be built with 60% green space, reserving 40% for the building itself on the 41 acre property. This will create and provide over 250 jobs. They are building on the parking lot, which has been a parking lot for 52 years.

Meijer is certain that they can incorporate some of the Geauga Lake nostalgia in the plans for the store. There may not be actual artifacts left from Geauga Lake, but there are photographs. Mr. Lewis suggested that perhaps there could be concert memorabilia or photo murals on the walls. He also mentioned the possibility of having a community room.

PUBLIC INTERACTION: Question and Answer

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Mr. Murphy asked if there was a time line to how long Meijer's will stay on the land based on the fact that there are so many other box stores in the area. Mr. Jones responded that Meijer has not closed many stores over the years. Meijer owns the store and the land and plans to stay for the long haul. Most of the other big box stores lease their land and their building.

Another resident asked how many of the 250 jobs will be minimum wage? Mr. Jones responded that there are numerous factors that determine the pay scale of all the positions. Factors include whether or not the job is union and what the local market demands.

Mr. Jones responded to a question by Mr. Hesse asking who survives: Walmart or Meijer. Mr. Jones feels strongly that there is room for both. He suggested that there are major differences in how they do business, but feels that they can both survive.

Mr. Spehn commented that the Sandusky store has historical elements of that area within the Meijer. He also suggested that the trash cans could possibly be created to look like a past era in Geauga Park.

Mr. Hesse would like to see Meijer use Geauga Lake names when naming parking lot areas of other areas within the store. He also wanted clarification on whether they were looking at other area nostalgia besides Geauga Lake. He suggested maybe a timeline of the area.

Mr. Markley wants to take part of the Big Dipper to use along the boulevard. He also asked Ms. Syx about integrating this property into the entire 600 acre site. Ms. Syx feels that Meijer's plans would fit into the idea and plans for the entire property. She mentioned putting up historical markers, as well. They discussed calling it Meijer of Geauga Lake.

Mrs. Kathleen Staudenbaur, of 8722 N. Springvalley Pk. Dr., made the suggestion that maybe the entrances could be designed in such a way that it would resemble the original Geauga Lake main gate entrance. She also suggested having an Elderly/Handicap pick up/drop off area for the mini buses and vans. She thanked Mr. Jones and his staff for their patience with the community on these matters and for being willing to include the Geauga Lake nostalgia in their store.

A resident asked if this will be a Meijer's store of Aurora or of Bainbridge. Mrs. Endres replied that it will have an Aurora mailing address, but it will be located in Bainbridge.

Mr. Ted Seliga, of 8654 N. Springvalley Pk. Dr., commented that although the history and nostalgia is nice, he feels that a plaque or mural would be fine. He feels that it is not critical to have all of the Geauga Lake nostalgia. He just wants to go to Meijer to shop.

Mr. Lewis commented that he is hopeful that this will be the beginning of a highly successful and wonderful shopping area, and he feels that we should take advantage of the history and make this an area that will attract businesses and shoppers.

Ms. Syx wants to make this a destination location. The next steps will include further discussions with Meijer in addition to a presentation to the Zoning Inspector.

The Trustees thanked Meijer and all the residents for attending and offering ideas and feedback.

A list of suggestions Meijer nostalgia ideas are attached and become a permanent part of these minutes.

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Since there was no further business to come before this meeting of the Bainbridge Township Board of Trustees, the meeting was adjourned 7:35 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice S. Sugarman,
Fiscal Officer, Bainbridge Township

Date

Date

Date

Minutes Read: _____

Minutes Approved: _____