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Senior living development seeks waiver of school fees

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MINOOKA - Ethan Properties is considering building a three-component facility just west of Jewel-Osco in Minooka, on the north side of U.S. 6.

Cass Wennlund approached the Minooka Community School District 201 Board at its regular monthly meeting Wednesday night asking for its support of waiving school impact fees that could reach around \$64,000 for the development.

"The first component will be a supportive-living facility," Wennlund said. "It will be an assisted-living facility until the proper ap-proval comes in to make it a supportive-living facility, but it will be a home where aging people live."

He said the 92-bed facility would only be the first step, with the second step comprised of 64 age-restricted homes for people 55 and older.

The board asked how the developers would prevent grandparents from moving their grandchildren into the home and impacting the school.

"One owner has to be over 55, but their spouse may be 51, so we allow people under age 55 to move in," Wennlund said. "However we will put an age restriction on the deed stating no one under the age of 19 may live in the residence."

The third section of the property will be a 12,800-square-foot retail center with space for a restaurant.

"Due to the lack of students, we are asking for a waiver of the school impact fee," Wennlund said. "We've approached the village and they have asked that we come to the schools directly."

Wennlund reported the 64 two-bedroom homes will sell for about \$193,000 each, and together would bring in \$115,000 a year to the school district in property taxes, with a total of \$1.7 million coming in from 2010 through 2025.

He said the entire development will bring in an additional \$218,000 a year or \$2.18 million over 10 years, without adding an additional child to the district.

Superintendent Al Gegenheimer reported to the board the village could approve the waiver without the school's input if it so chooses.

Board member Jeff Budde said he appreciated the village asking for the school's opinion on the matter.

Dr. Don McKinney asked what Ethan Properties would do if it didn't receive the waiver, wanting to know if it would stop the project.

"No one element will cause the project to fail," Wennlund said. "But we are asking for variances to lot sizes as well as the waivers. The answers to our requests, together, will make our decision."

When asked what the benefit is to the school district, Gegenheimer pointed out this would take a lot of acreage off the map, ensuring no future students from the land, as well as adding to the taxes paid to the school.

"When senior communities are near a school, it allows our children a place to perform and, often times, we find seniors who are willing to come in and read to our students or help out in other areas," Gegenheimer said.

In a separate matter also related to the growth of the district, the board approved the purchase of 42 acres on Seil Road for a future school.

"We are purchasing while the price is where it is, instead of waiting for land prices to go back up," Board President Jim Satorius said. "We've been working on this for two to three years."

The board approved the purchase at its last regular meeting, but the district has settled further issues on the purchase and voted with the assurances in place.

There will be a performance bond in the amount of \$1.2 million to do the site work.

The district was also granted easement in case it decides to build an off-site water retention pond, and it won't be required to do its own road work.

Also part of the agreement is a clause that, if the district builds several years from now and the bond isn't enough, it will be able to recapture costs.

During an update the board learned work on current construction projects is behind schedule due to the cold weather and snow, but Gilbaine is searching for creative ways to make up the time.

"I've never failed to deliver a school on time," said a representative of Gilbaine. "I'm not about to start now."