

Thomas Harrigan

From: Mau Den <maudenny1030@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 4:44 PM
To: Thomas Harrigan
Subject: Meeting re SSND/Mandel

Hi mr. Harrigan

Due to Covid I am unable to attend meeting. I would, however, like to follow it on zoom if you would kindly send me a link.

If you would please add my letter to the file regarding this matter, I would appreciate it.

Thank you,

Maureen Denny

To village elders and fellow citizens

I am writing regarding the property that was formally known as School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) building and grounds.

I have lived in Elm Grove for almost my entire life. I currently live at 1075 Grandview Dr. I was born and raised on Fairhaven Blvd.

The SSND building and grounds, as well as the Sisters, have a prominent place in my life and memories. Much like the Halfway House (now Walgreens), Sanders Blacksmith (now US Bank), Elm Grove Inn (now Silver Spur), Reinders (adapted from farm products and groceries to other businesses), and so many other landmarks that have changed over the years.

What I really want is that there be no change, that the Sisters were well funded, and that they could live out their lives, (and me mine), with no change. But reality sets in. The Sisters, who have been incredibly generous to our village, need to sell. Change is inevitable. If the citizens on Elm Grove did not want this land developed, then they should have generously donated to the Sisters and attended their fundraising events. I did not see many of you in the crowd.

So here I am, change will happen. Traffic is increasing on Watertown Plank Road. It has been increasing for around 30 years or more. Long trains cause backups more than the influx of traffic. I see cars coming from the east heading to Elm Grove Road to get to Bluemound. I have always thought that 124th to Bluemound (underpass by tracks) made traffic sense. If traffic is an issue, here is a possible solution.

Having been a member of the Elm Grove Business Association, I have seen firsthand how businesses in Elm Grove struggle. To be a vibrant, healthy economy we need all of our good businesses to succeed. Some are saying we only need restaurants and food venues. I believe all of our businesses deserve our patronage. An influx of new citizens, walking distance from businesses center, will help provide prosperity to our current (and future) businesses. If they succeed, we all win. Many of them are our friends and neighbors.

I am thrilled that the historic buildings will remain. I would have fought their removal. I would like to see the additional buildings to reflect some of the old, (similar building materials, brick color?) but let's face it - almost every home in Elm Grove has its own personality and I'm sure this project will as well. I appreciate the wide spectrum of architecture in the village. I have seen many homes get built or renovated. Some, I love the outcome, others not to my taste, but I don't believe that community gets the final say, the owner does. It is their risk, not mine, not yours.

I have reviewed the two options that are being proposed. I like Option 1 that shows more single family homes and less rental units. I would, however, like to see some of those rental units become senior units (as offered in Option 2) I know many who have moved from Elm Grove because they no longer wanted to be homeowners, and they seem to prefer senior units.

I am not against rental units. By that I am hoping that they are well constructed and well maintained. Reasonable density is understood. Environmental issues must be forefront. I do not believe that Mandel has a slumlord reputation and I don't think they aspire to gain one. When I wasn't living in Elm Grove I rented. I believe that very few of us could say that we never rented. Renting (landlord or tenant) is not an illegal enterprise. It does not matter what you or I say about the cost of units. The market will decide. If the landlord asks too much, they might have to leave space empty or lower the rent. Either way, I have no skin in this game and I don't believe anyone should be sticking their nose into it. I am sure everyone would like to set the rates for whatever you do in your business, but they don't. That said I am all for lower income units. Elm Grove has a diversity of home styles, it could use a more diverse representation of its citizens. But then again, it is not for me to decide (but feel free to use my suggestion).

The income from real estate taxes will hopefully ease my tax burden, pay for needed maintenance, help our library, fire and police departments, make city water available to residents who want/need it, fund our volunteer projects, and improve the entire village. I have heard talk that this project might involve Tax Increment Financing (TIF), I am not sure that is in our best interests. I'll leave it at that.

Elm Grove was truly charming. When I grew up, we always welcomed our new neighbors. We helped one another, found solutions and worked together for the greater good. It was the people who made the village charming. Today I see folks up in arms about change, possible renovations, a difference of thought, before they ever meet and welcome their new neighbors. Neighbor used to be a friendly connotation, not just a word to explain vicinity. When I grew up here it was more of a farm community and friendlier. Now it sometimes sounds more elitist and excluding. Property values are great, personal connections are more meaningful. I am blessed that I have many neighbors that are fantastic and help create a great community. I think we, as a village, can get back to what really is important.

I wish the Sisters of SSND the best of luck and happiness in their new setting. I wish this project moves along and we all accept the inevitable change. Furthermore, I sincerely wish that all of us will strive to be charming to our future, new, and current neighbors.

Sincerely,
Maureen Denny

Sent from my iPad