

Residents take development concerns to Dunkirk board

By Tristan McGough
Special to the Reporter

When asked by Dunkirk Chairperson Norman Monsen for a show of hands, three of the 14 residents who came to the regular town hall meeting on Feb. 5, 2018, indicated they were from Stoughton. It was all about annexation and development.

“We’re concerned, too,” one of them exclaimed, joining the Dunkirk chorus of public comments in the key of complaint.

Clearly sympathetic to their combined cause, the Chair had already accommodated the rather unusually large assembly—for a routine Monday night board meeting—by moving their item up the agenda and dealing with it forthwith.

Distilled from what was said, it appears that 13 families are directly and adversely affected by what’s going on at the old Eggleston’s Woods; however, just what is going on there was a matter of much speculation, fueled by fears of annexation and residential or—worse yet—to those impacted—commercial development.

At the center of the controversy is Bob Dvorak, who purchased about 72 acres last October along Hwy 51, including the property north of Velkommen Way that has a property-boundary to the Town of Rutland-Dunn Town-Line. Just north of the town-line is farmland previously annexed by the City of Stoughton, and the apprehension of those assembled at the Dunkirk Town Hall is that a similar fate awaits all or some of Dvorak’s parcel, around 30 acres of it reportedly

being developed by RHD Properties. This company is not to be confused with RHD Plumbing out of Stoughton, which Dvorak owned and operated prior to selling some years back.

Contacting Dvorak, he said to this reporter, “The property had been on the market for nine months to a year before I purchased it.” He confessed that at this point, he doesn’t quite know what to make of the brouhaha.

“They all had a chance to buy it from Tom Matson, the realtor assigned to sell the property,” Dvorak said, referring to Matson & Associates, Inc., located in Stoughton.

Dvorak hadn’t any idea of the cauldron of complaints being stirred that Monday night, but demonstrably there were those at that Feb. 5 meeting who could now kick themselves for not purchasing the property when it had been available, perhaps even owning it as an association and then later determine just how they’d manage the property in common.

But an association was only one of many imaginative suggestions that swirled around the issue of what would become of the now de-forested land, which had been recently cleared of what Dvorak described as “mainly junk trees with some old, broken or dying black walnut trees on the edge of the property.”

Clearing the land—removing all trees and other plant growth that had arisen over the 45 to 47 years that the land was in a conservation program—sent a signal to neighboring residents that change was in the works.

Taking the sum of the testimony at face value, it appears that all 13 negatively impacted families would have been quite content to leave the woods as it had been. They didn’t want to see any of it change.

One of them, Mike Brown, proffered a photograph of a lonely Egglewood’s sign standing against a now decimated forest.

Brown said, “These are before and after pictures of this developer completely demolishing seven acres of woods in five days without any contact with the 21 homeowners that are affected.”

He added to what had been a chorus line of complaints at Monday night’s forum, “They took out a row of 100-year old black walnuts. Took out areas where owls have nested for years. Senseless.”

The ecological devastation is what had many neighbors up-in-arms. Brown voiced their common sentiment, “This is what happens when someone with money doesn’t care. Owls, fox, deer have no home.”

Dvorak recalls, “I used to ride my mini-bike there as a kid from where my parents live—they still do—just north of the property.” His father owned the old Dvorak Chevrolet dealership along Hwy. 51.

As Bob Dvorak tells it, and Monsen told those assembled Monday night, the Granrud family once owned the property in question, and the land was put into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for 10 or 15 years around 45-47 years ago. The CRP gave farmers a yearly rental payment in exchange for them removing en-

vironmentally sensitive land from agricultural production. Instead, they were to manage the land to ensure the growth of flora that improved its environmental quality.

However, after the annual payments ceased, Granrud neglected the careful stewardship of the land, thereby allowing it to naturally convert to the woods everyone got to know and love.

“I had an arborist come out to take a look at the trees,” Dvorak explains, “but he said they were mostly scrub trees and when it came to the black walnuts, they were old, most dead or dying. Many were split or had broken limbs.”

Without proper land management, the trees sprouted willy-nilly, as did a lot of undergrowth. What had not been intended to happen—in fact, what the CRP had intended to avoid—was what actually did happen: the land reverted to its natural state, being dubbed in due course “Eggleston’s Wood.”

With the city slowly but consistently swallowing the land surrounding the 13 families concerned about the land Dvorak cleared, they are pushing back. Those at the meeting said they’ve reached out to express their concerns to Dvorak. Brown summarized their frustration, “There are 13 families exposed to what he’s done. He cut everything right up to their property lines, not even a buffer. Everything, gone.”

Frustration mounted in some to the point they doubted that Dvorak had any conscience at all.

“I did reach out to them,” Dvorak countered, “I left my phone number...no one contacted me!”

Monsen attempted to mediate the conflict, having spoken to Dvorak prior, telling the forum that Dvorak would be returning from vacation in March



A look at the woods prior to (above) and after (below) its clearing.

Photos submitted by Mike Brown



and had expressed a willingness to meet with those concerned. Dvorak confirmed the same over the phone.

However, the crowd was not satisfied, feeling the chance for any meaningful dialogue had passed away along with the felled trees.

“What would that accomplish?” “How would that do any good now?” “Why would he listen now when he wouldn’t before?” A flurry of rhetorical questions captured the aversive mood.

Regardless, Kent Falligant, Plan Commission Chair, was at the town hall meeting to confirm that the land is zoned A1-Exclusive. “There’s not much he can do with the land but farm it,” the Chair remarked.

Speaking with Dvorak, that’s exactly what he intends

to do with it.

“I’ll be having the stumps ground down and the depressed areas filled in,” he avers. “Then I’ll be planting corn.”

That will be for this year. Nevertheless, some sort of change from that is inevitable. Supervisor Ted Olson tried to assuage the complainants, “We’ve been through this before.” The board promised to do what they could to resolve the issue, but the larger issue looms: future annexations and developments are inevitable.

The Purchase of Development Rights program being initiated by the town is meant to address that larger issue.

However, whether Dunkirk can implement the program in time to possibly apply it to Dvorak’s piece of property is very much in doubt.



Once a sentinel to Eggleston's Woods, the sign is its last remnant.

Photo by Mike Brown

Edgerton Area Chamber of Commerce

Annual Meeting

Thursday, Feb. 22

5:00-7:00 p.m.

Social hour from 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Program begins at 6:00 p.m.

Lounge 1848 - 112 W Fulton Street, Edgerton

Food Provided

RSVP to info@edgertonchamber.com for a free drink ticket!



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Bring ideas on how to make our chamber better!



The Edgerton Reporter will be saluting our local Future Farmers of America in the Feb. 21 issue.

This issue will spotlight local FFA members, and their many activities throughout the year.

To be included in this annual National FFA Week Salute, please contact

The **Edgerton Reporter**

at 608-884-3367, or stop by the office at 21 N. Henry Street.



ARFTIC ART FOR ANIMALS



Saturday, February 24th, 2018

Pontiac Convention Center

10am-4pm

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