

# Meijer lists demands in hyperstore application

By JOAN DEMIRJIAN

Meijer submitted an application for a hyperstore on the former Geauga Lake Park property, but its extensive list of establishments it wants prohibited from locating in the area is raising concerns with officials from both Bainbridge and Aurora.

"They (apparently) don't want competition with anything they sell," Bainbridge Trustee Jeff Markley said, adding that trustees are not on board with that at this time.

The land owned by Cedar Fair of Sandusky became officially zoned

for mixed-use on July 8 in Bainbridge. It includes about 322 acres in Aurora and 270 in Bainbridge. Aurora rezoned the land a month ago. Meijer wants to build on 41 acres of the land in Bainbridge.

Meijer - a national chain that sells groceries, electronics, clothing and more - applied for a 41-acre lot to be split from the rest of the Cedar Fair property. The split would allow Meijer to get zoning for its big-box store, a use that is not permitted in the mixed-use plan.

But Bainbridge Zoning Inspector

Karen Endres said there's something missing from the grocery store chain's application.

Mr. Markley said Meijer needs a storm-water plan that must be approved by the Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District to complete its application.

"This is part of a much bigger project and storm-water plans have to cover the entire Cedar Fair acreage," Mr. Markley said. Meijer has "to participate for their 41 acres and off their site."

Mrs. Endres said she will accept the incomplete application for review with expectations of splitting the 41-acre lot from the rest within 30 days. She also wants to see the lot coverage for the store. Township zoning requires that lot coverage for any commercial development must not exceed 40 percent of the site.

Meijer, headquartered in Michigan, has proposed building a 200,000-square-foot store with 600 to 800 parking spaces facing Aurora Road (Route 43).

Meijer's proposed list of prohibited uses for the future development of the 592 acres of Cedar Fair land includes coffee and doughnut shops, pharmacies, department stores, gas stations and tire sales, DVD sales and theaters.

And there's more. Meijer also does not want any other stores selling beer, wine or ale for off-premises consumption, stores that sell specialty, ethnic or health foods, a combination food and general merchandise store, discount retail stores, a bar or tavern, a tattoo parlor, pawn shop and amusement or recreational establishments.

A pool hall, bowling alley, game center and establishment with electronic gaming machines, are also included on Meijer's prohibition list. Stores that sell or rent videotapes, DVDs and video games are on the hyperstore chain's list along with vending machines and promotional devices outside of a building.

Aurora Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin said in a letter to Meijer representatives that the list of prohibited uses is a concern to her city. Such restrictions would eliminate some important potential uses on the property contemplated by the mixed-use zoning change,

that was voted on by residents, she said.

Mayor Womer Benjamin said the city should be given the opportunity to review the list of proposed restrictions and to comment on them.

Bainbridge Trustee Christopher Horn said initially the chain's long list pertained to other stores that would be 200 feet or so from the proposed Meijer location, but now it's all the Cedar Fair property in Aurora and Bainbridge.

That creates concerns about whether the two communities would have the ability to develop the rest of the property, Mr. Horn said, an issue brought to the attention of Meijer officials.

Mr. Markley said Meijer's list would create a hardship. "We won't accept it."

Mr. Markley also said that Meijer has to participate in development standards and build to the township's mixed-use plan standards. They also have to provide a public road into the Meijer property that gives access to the rest of the Cedar Fair property as well when it is developed, he said.

Bainbridge and Aurora are to complete a joint economic development district or JEDD agreement before the city extends sewers and water services to the site, Mr. Markley said. Cities can collect income taxes, but townships cannot by state law. The JEDD will allow the city of Aurora to collect and share income taxes of employees working in establishments on the property with Bainbridge Township.

While the new mixed-use zoning does not permit big-box stores, township trustees said they would make an exception for the Meijer store providing its building reflects the history of Geauga Lake Park.

Mr. Markley said the trustees have authorized the zoning inspector to proceed with the application although it is technically incomplete. "She can review it as it is, but the lot split has not occurred yet and the storm water plan has to be submitted."

The message is that while the zoning application will be reviewed, it does not guarantee approval of a zoning permit, Mr. Markley said. "Approval or denial depends on the zoning inspector's review and the trustees' conditions." It will also be reviewed by inSITE Advisory planning group.

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