

[http://www.chagrinvalleytoday.com/communities/bainbridge/article\\_092f223a-95aa-11e8-8d89-af776c410ef2.html](http://www.chagrinvalleytoday.com/communities/bainbridge/article_092f223a-95aa-11e8-8d89-af776c410ef2.html)

## Meijer pulls back on plans to build in Bainbridge

JOAN DEMIRJIAN Aug 2, 2018

BAINBRIDGE — Plans to build a Meijer mega store on former Geauga Lake park land along Aurora Road are off the table for now.

“Our contract to purchase that site has expired so we currently have no plans for a store at that specific” location, Frank Guglielmi, senior director of communications for Meijer, said of land owned by Cedar Fair.

“The Bainbridge Township area remains of interest to us, although at this point we have no site under contract in that area,” he noted.

Meijer first submitted an application for the site in 2015. The plan called for a 200,000-square-foot building on 41 acres at what was once the parking lot for the amusement park. The site is across from the entrance to the Marketplace at Four Corners Shopping Center on Aurora Road (Route 43).

Reports that Meijer would not move forward with building the store first surfaced in May. That information came during a meeting between representatives of the Cedar Fair and Geauga County who were discussing sites for the proposed Swagelok global headquarters and innovation center. The Solon manufacturing company requested proposals from government bodies and landowners earlier this summer.

Gauga County Commissioners are proposing the Cedar Fair property as a possible site for Swagelok.

At that time, Bainbridge Zoning Inspector Karen Endres said she had not heard anything directly from Meijer representatives. She had previously approved a lot split of 41 acres from the Cedar Fair property for Meijer.

As of last week, she said she did not know that the Meijer application was being dropped. “I have heard nothing from anyone associated with that project in months,” Mrs. Endres said.

The application process was never completed nor were construction plans submitted, she said. The first contact with Meijer representatives was in 2014 when she met with the company's engineer.

The township was rezoning the Cedar Fair property to a mixed use and there was a moratorium on development during the rezoning process. Township trustees met with Meijer and Cedar Fair and an agreement was made to permit Meijer to locate on the property, she said.

"I never received a complete application," Mrs. Endres said. While the lot split to 41 acres was carried out, she never heard further from Meijer.

And at this time, there have been no other proposals or applications from other businesses for the Cedar Fair land, Mrs. Endres added.

The Meijer store chain had submitted its application for its store at the site where the township has rezoned the area of about 260 acres of Cedar Fair property for mixed-use zoning which does not include big-box stores.

Meijer, however, was to be given the ability to move forward with its plan on the 41 acres if it met certain township conditions including having a storm-water plan in place.

Meijer, headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, proposed to build a store facing Aurora Road, with 600 to 800 parking spaces.

Trustee Jeff Markley said Meijer was being required to participate in development standards and build to the township's mixed-use plan standards. The company also had to provide a public road into the Meijer property that gives access to the rest of the Cedar Fair property.

Bainbridge and Aurora were to complete a joint economic development district agreement before the city extended sewers and water to the site, according to Mr. Markley. A JEDD would have allowed the two communities to collect income taxes from those who work in the area. Townships cannot collect income taxes unless they join with a municipality under a JEDD.

In addition to the 250 acres in Bainbridge, the former Geauga Lake site has almost the same number of acres in the city of Aurora.

The township also talked of the store incorporating components that reflect the history of Geauga Lake park. Township Trustees wanted a nostalgic theme to be blended into the store's architecture. Meijer representatives at the time showed an interest in incorporating the history of the park into the building and memorializing it on a monument sign.

Mr. Markley said this week that it's possible Meijer could negotiate for a site on Cedar Fair land.

Cedar Fair will try to bring it back, he said. "It makes sense because Meijer put in a lot of engineering work. I don't see them starting over on another site in Bainbridge." They will do it and it will be right back on the Cedar Fair property, he added.

"I think they didn't like the delays," Mr. Markley said. He noted the JEDD discussions were moving forward and then an issue came up involving trees being cleared on some Cedar Fair property.

The logging was in opposition to an agreement with the township and Cedar Fair in which tree clearing was prohibited near the homes in the area. That issue halted everything on the Cedar Fair property, Mr. Markley said.

Meijer stores sell foods, apparel, garden supplies, electronics and a pharmacy. Meijer proposed deed restrictions on Cedar Fair property surrounding the 41 acres including prohibiting certain establishments that would compete with the store. A compromise was reached on the proposed restrictions.

---

Joan Demirjian