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Sent: Sunday, October 1, 2023 5:12 PM

To: Planning & Development <plandev@countyofdane.com>; info@town.middleton.wi.us

Subject: neighborhood feedback against CUP 2606

Please see attached letter and distribute as appropriate.

Thank you,
Carrie Cook

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

RE: CUP 2606

01 October 2023

Dear Town Board Members,

I am a long-time resident of the Town. I am writing to voice my concerns regarding CUP 2606, the Four Paws large kennel operation. Fortunately, a neighbor alerted me to this pending action which will directly affect my household. Although I am generally not politically active (except for voting), I did attend the crowded town meeting and am following this issue. I see on the Town website there is a signed petition in opposition to the kennel. I would add my name to this given the opportunity. Also, in case I cannot attend the follow-up meeting on 02 Oct 2023, and to ensure my voice is heard, I am writing this letter, which I hope will be read and considered by all Town Board members.

My objections to granting this permit are that it will increase obnoxious noise and traffic, degrade the nature of my neighborhood, and lower my perceived and actual property values. Zoning restrictions exist for a reason! Dog kennels are clearly inappropriate for residential areas—hence, the many current kennels in Madison and adjacent communities are in commercial and industrial zones. While I see how repurposing a family stable is a tempting business opportunity, such a business is not compatible with the general local welfare and not worthy of an exemption. In all key aspects, a horse-riding business very different from a doggie daycare and kennel, and this is recognized and upheld by standard zoning.

Living adjacent to Valley View Road at the crest of a “blind” hill, I am very aware of the danger presented by traffic. The wide open “country” feel seems to encourage speeding. My son’s service dog was hit by a truck at this spot. I watched a car pass a stopped school bus which my son was boarding here as well. As the local population has increased, so has the hazard. The projected extra traffic due to this new commercial enterprise is significant. Additionally, it will be concentrated at the ends of the day, magnifying the impact beyond strict numbers. Valley View Road in particular is tricky, being narrow, largely without sidewalks, and having blind hills, stops, and driveways which are especially risky for those not aware of its subtleties by driving it daily. This risk is heightened by people focused on rushing to drop off or pick up their pet before or after work or vacation. I don’t think granting exceptions for this new business is worth the inevitable increased traffic risk to the local community.

Way beyond traffic noise, the noise of barking dogs is highly objectionable to many, if not most people. Both I and my mother are extremely sensitive to that particular noise. While perhaps not rising to the point of hyperacusis, it is extremely distracting and I have a hard time ignoring it, making it hard to do other things. I work from home and my office faces the direction of the kennel, separated by just one property, so I predict this adversely affecting my job. I say this as a dog owner/lover myself. Dogs WILL bark; it’s their nature. They bark especially while playing with or meeting other dogs. The extreme and continuous barking is readily apparent to anyone passing by existing kennels and play areas—dogs will indeed act like dogs at their proposed facility, like at any other.

The public hearing I attended was full to overflowing of concerned neighbors having the same objections; I just hope this show of democracy in action is sufficient to convince the Board to deny this proposal accordingly. The objection of waste smell and removal I think was adequately addressed, but issues of noise, traffic, and property values remain. At least two people who were present noted that many of the voices heard that night were not Town of Middleton residents, due to the property bordering Madison, but that does NOT make their arguments invalid; they should be thought of as spokespeople and representative

of those within the Town having those very same viewpoints. That night the applicants' granddaughter and perspective head of the business responded to the question of how they would reduce outside noise by saying the employees would stop dogs from barking or remove the barking ones from the outside run to the inside. I am certain employees would not possess that magic ability, nor be allowed leave the many dogs unsupervised to escort single dogs back inside. This sort of answer either shows complete ignorance of dog behavior, or intentional, disingenuous overpromising in hopes of brushing aside uncomfortable issues. She also said during her introduction that the kennel was to board both cats and dogs, but the written application and business plan had no such provision.

Several incidents along those lines make me doubtful that even if the CUP were granted, they would not abide by the given restrictions. First, alerting neighbors was the bare legal minimum, if even that, as if public awareness or discussion would be detrimental to their petition. There is only one property between my house and the stables, but I heard about it from a friend, not the applicants. The business plan and applicants repeatedly emphasized the insulation of the barn-turned-kennel, but that is a red herring, irrelevant to the primary issue of dogs barking during outside playtime and dropoff/pickup. From the news reporting on their recent open house, they said they hired an independent consultant who declared that the inside noise would be insignificant...but they did not report what effects/extent outside noise would be. There is no way you'd commission a study and then not ask for evaluation of outside barking, which has always been most people's primary objection. Since they did not brag about the outdoors result, I reason that that it did NOT pass muster, and that the most relevant –and highly damaging–part of this report was not revealed to the public. In addressing traffic concerns, they say that's not an issue because they've held many well-attended horse events in the past and it was "not an issue" (to whom?). This too is disingenuous, and again aims to side-step and minimize foreseen problems: a very occasional horse event, probably on a Saturday, decades ago is not comparable to the effects of daily, continuous traffic today. I am told they've now hired a lawyer to try to force this through over legitimate objections of their neighbors. Their progressive actions have not succeeded in winning me over; in fact, they've strengthened my stance in opposition. I suspect the plan is to make whatever concessions are necessary to grant initial CUP, then quietly expand and erode the limiting provisions which would hamper a business—if I were to use a dog kennel, it would be essential that my dog be granted outside playtime. I do view the granting of this or other iterations of their CUP for a dog kennel/daycare facility as a slippery slope that takes us where we don't want to be as a community.

Granting CUP2606 will present a new, constant noise nuisance, increase traffic next to my house, and decrease my property's value to myself and commercially, should I choose to sell or mortgage my house. The sequential modifications to their past denied proposals do not adequately address these main objections, and I am concerned what this will easily morph to in the future. As a town resident, I plead with you NOT to support this exemption which would establish a dog kennel at 3440 Meadow Road.

Thank you for your consideration.



Carrie Cook
7383 Valley View Road
Town of Middleton