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Please Apply the Same Consideration

To the Editor:

The neighbors near 1550 Lennoxville Road have a question for James M. Davis III of Jim Dandy Stores and Sara W. Austin of Austin Veterinary Hospital: Would you agree to allow construction of a Jim Dandy convenience store, complete with gas pumps and late operating hours, within a few feet of your family's home?

That's exactly what homeowners of Beaufort Walk, the Oaks, Ocean Street, Briar Patch Drive and other streets along Lennoxville Road are now facing with a request before Beaufort Planning Director Kyle Garner and the unelected Planning Board on July 19, 2021.

Sara Austin is moving her vet practice from 1550 Lennoxville Road to a new location – and Jim Davis is salivating at the opportunity for a special use permit that will allow construction of a Jim Dandy gas station development and convenience store on the property.

Homeowners, some within 20 feet of the building and its proposed tank operations, are facing increased and hazardous traffic congestion, noise, bright lights, smelly dumpsters, loitering and crime as potential impacts. Jim Dandy stores in both Morehead City and Havelock have faced armed robberies recently.

Jim Dandy gas stations have a past history of violations for out-of-compliance gas storage tanks and equipment. What about fires, fuel discharge, cleanup and groundwater issues?

Lennoxville, a state-owned road, has no turning lanes or shoulders, should vehicles, trucks with trailers, or multi-ton hauler trucks need to vacate the narrow two-lane road for fire engine access. In addition, there is no stop sign or stoplight to modulate traffic flow at that busy intersection (Lennoxville Road at Ocean Street).

And what about the value and marketability of our homes? There are 10 homes located within 100 feet of this proposed Jim Dandy, 21 homes within 200 feet, 49 homes within 300 feet, and 92 homes within 500 feet. Our adjacent neighborhoods are primarily comprised of year-round residents, including retirees, elderly women, and young children, not the weekend/seasonal visitors with second homes.

(more)

The planning board meeting, which was originally to be held in-person at the Beaufort Depot on July 19, has been subverted to a Zoom-only meeting. This is an obvious move to squelch in-person public comment from numerous concerned neighbors.

In November 2020, the Beaufort Board of Commissioners (following a planning board recommendation) approved a special use permit for Austin Vet's move to its new location. In doing so, they said their decision was in keeping with the character of the area and would not injure the value of adjoining properties and endanger public health or safety. Such irony!

We implore the Planning Board and Commissioners to apply these same considerations for the proposal before them on July 19 and DENY this special use permit for Jim Dandy convenience store and gas station at Lennoxville Road in Beaufort.

Suzanne Lea
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