

Crowd turns out in Hillsborough for dog care pitch

By **NICOLE MORELLA**
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HILLSBOROUGH — Some residents are worried that Hillsborough is going to the dogs.

An application for a use variance to establish a dog day-care center was heard before the Board of Adjustment on Wednesday night, drawing a crowd of about 40 people.

Robin Blair is proposing using the property at 451 Amwell Road to start a dog day-care center for canines whose owners are at work all day. No decision was made late Wednesday night, and the application process was continued until Jan. 22.

"We think there is a need for this type of activity, and the zoning laws haven't really caught up to that need yet," said Frank Linnus, Blair's attorney. Blair, a township resident, explained that while dog day-care centers are very popular in California and Florida, they are fairly new to New Jersey.

As some in the audience shook their heads and snickered at the idea, Blair explained the particulars of her plan to buy the land. She would care for 35 to 50 dogs on the 4.26-acre site from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

There would be a screening process to select dogs for the facility, and aggressive dogs would not be permitted, Blair said. Dogs also would have to be spayed or neutered and have up-to-date vaccinations.

There would be a 6-foot-tall solid board fence surrounding the property, and dogs would be under constant supervision even though they would be free to roam the property.

What's next

◆ The hearing on the dog day-care center will continue at the Jan. 22 meeting of the Hillsborough Board of Adjustment. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at the municipal building, 379 S. Branch Road.

Blair was immediately questioned about noise problems created by the estimated number of dogs.

"They are not going to bark incessantly like dogs do in a kennel," she said, because they are free to roam and play with other dogs.

Blair said she feels there is a need for this type of service because there are 3,000 licensed dogs in Hillsborough alone. Many times the pets are in houses or cages all day while their owners work.

"They really do need some socialization," she testified on Wednesday night.

Eleanor Luddy lives on Manor Drive, adjacent to the proposed center, and is opposed to the idea.

"I don't like the idea of all those dogs, the noise," she said. "I think everyone feels that it will diminish the worth of the development as well."

Resident Barbara Glasgow is also worried about the noise level and said she had a hard time with the concept of a day-care center for dogs.

"I'm kind of torn because I love dogs," she said. "I think dogs should be included in the community, but not in that manner and not in that number."

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