

## Dog center doesn't belong near homes

To the editor:

I'm a resident at the Manors and, like many of my neighbors, am adamantly opposed to the proposed "Dog Day Care Center" on the adjacent property. The Zoning Board is presently considering a request for a variance that would permit the currently C-1 zoned property to be used for the dog center.

According to Robin Blair, the applicant, this would be an operation wherein a number of dogs would be free to roam the enclosed property from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., 7 days a week. While Ms. Blair indicated that she was expecting between 35 and 50 dogs no actual limit on the number of dogs is set.

With approximately 3,500 registered dogs in Hillsborough and, I assume a like amount in Montgomery and other neighboring communities, a mere 1 percent market share could easily balloon the number of dogs to 100 or 150. Applicant's indicates that they will travel as far as 10 miles to pick up a client's pet.

Along with approximately 40 other families I attended the Hillsborough Zoning Board meeting on Jan. 8.

The things that particularly concerned me included:

After Mr. Linnus ( the attorney for the applicant) made his introductory comments I was amazed that the Zoning Board did not dismiss the application on the spot. Mr. Linnus pointed out that there is currently no zoning classification that specifically lists this type occupancy ( "dog day care center"); that the property in question (451 Amwell Rd is zoned C-1), which lists a number of retail or , service occupancies all of which are "people-oriented") and that there is a separate zoning classification that applies to both kennels and veterinarians.

Clearly, the proposed dog day care center has more in common with a kennel or veterinary operation it does with any C-1 operation. Obviously, previous planning boards didn't want such a business as that which is now proposed bordering approximately 80 residences.

I drove onto the property in question the next day and immediately realized that the site diagram that the Mr. Linnus exhibited to the zoning board appeared deceptive in scale. The diagram makes it appear that the Manors is so far away that noise, diminishing property values and other matters shouldn't be a concern. However, when you actually see it you realize you are but a stone's throw away.

Like any homeowner I'm concerned with property values. It seems obvious that sticking a dog day care center next to houses or condominiums would decrease the market value of those residences. I decided to see what realtors had to say.

The general consensus was that Manors property would be "less desirable," and "shouldn't be expected to continue to appreciate" and "it doesn't do anything good for the Manors." The tax base here is in the millions.

Excessive barking is a major problem voiced by many. In her testimony Miss Blair indicated that because the dogs would be in a social environment minimal barking should be expected. I imagine that the veterinarian who is scheduled to testify on her behalf will corroborate her statement.

The fact of the matter, however, is that dogs also bark when over stimulated; they bark at birds, squirrels, deer, passing cars, thunder, sirens, and other dogs. They bark when they're happy; when they're upset; when they're attempting to establish territorial superiority; and probably bark when their owners get their annual property tax bill.

The stench generated from the natural waste of anywhere from 35 to 100 dogs is something that all Hillsborough residents should be concerned with not just those who reside nearby. Miss Blair would have us believe that the "caregiver" (attendant) remains vigilant and swoops in behind the dogs to quickly clean the grass.

As well intentioned as Miss Blair appears to be, many of us remain concerned about the welfare of the animals that would be at the Dog DayCare Center. This concern arises from the operations as described by Miss Blair. In cold, wet or inclement weather dogs that were not masters of body language, or whose "caregivers" couldn't read body language could very well be left out in that weather. If brought inside the picture painted was one wherein these 35 to 150 dogs (depending on how successful the business becomes) would have the run of the house.

A brook runs through the property. The cumulative adverse impact of dog waste, the pesticides, herbicides, and disinfectants used in the business introduces an other unnecessary and avoidable hazard.

I believe most of us admire her entrepreneurial spirit but feel that the placement of her proposed business at this particular site is inappropriate, creates avoidable hazards and nuisances; diminishes our rights to the peaceful enjoyment of our property and diminishes the value of our property.

To the Zoning Board, I'd like to say that in the previous administration I've repeatedly seen the board dismiss the desires of the long term, taxpaying township residents in favor of businesses. The time is long over-due for the Zoning Board to be more responsive to the desires of the current residents.

Rejection of this application is a first step in the right direction.

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