

City of Wimberley
Wimberley Community Center, 14068 Ranch Road 12
Wimberley, Texas 78676
**Minutes of Special Joint Meeting of the City Council and
Planning and Zoning Commission**
February 22, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission joint meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Mac McCullough.

Council Members Present: Mayor Mac McCullough and Councilmembers Craig Fore, Sally Trapp, Gary Barchfeld, and John White. Councilmember Bob Dussler was absent.

Planning and Zoning Commission Members Present: Chair John Urban, Members Austin Weeks, Charles Savino, Natalie Meeks, Rebecca McCullough, and John Espinoza. Commissioner Gail Pigg was absent.

Staff Present: City Administrator Don Ferguson

Presentation

Presentation regarding the proposed development of a Tractor Supply retail store in Wimberley, Hays, County, Texas.

Mayor McCullough outlined procedures for tonight's presentation by Tractor Supply representatives and for public speakers.

City Administrator Ferguson introduced Tractor Supply developer Travis Knoll who began his presentation with a history of Tractor Supply's vision, services, products, and values. He spoke on benefits to the community such as increased sales tax revenue, increased spending with other local retailers, partnerships with local youth programs such as FFA and 4-H, and grants/scholarships. Mr. Knoll provided information on the proposed location, site design, intent to comply with Wimberley's Zoning Code and TCEQ, tree preservation, xeriscaping, septic system design, building layout, parking, building design/materials/colors, lighting, and compatibility with surroundings.

Sandy Pellerin, who lives directly across the street from the proposed development, spoke of traffic hazards that would worsen with truck traffic. Mr. Knoll said his team has contacted TxDOT on meeting its guidelines and requirements. Mrs. Pellerin said it is one of the most dangerous spots in Wimberley with non-stop traffic and feared more back-ups and crashes will occur with a Tractor Supply at the proposed location. She asked Mr. Knoll about putting in a turn lane and he replied it is not required by TxDOT. Mrs. Pellerin spoke again of the hazards at that location.

Rocky Boschert asked if Tractor Supply has contacted the four businesses in town that carry merchandise similar to Tractor Supply. Mr. Knoll replied negatively. Mr. Boschert asked for

representatives from those four businesses to stand up, if here tonight. Mr. Boschert asked to speak to the owners of Tractor Supply and said he heard that some of their stores have a rat problem. Mr. Boschert asked who is responsible and said those are the people who should be responding to concerns and questions. Mr. Boschert said ultimately taxpayers will pay infrastructure costs for Tractor Supply to build on the highway. Mr. Knoll said as the property developer, “we pay to bring water and utility services to the property.” Mr. Boschert asked for the total infrastructure cost. Mr. Knoll said it involves extending water and power lines and there will be on-site septic, but did not have a total cost at this time. Mr. Boschert said he likes knowing the owners of businesses he does business with. He said none of Tractor Supply’s top management will be here if things go wrong and noted that T. Rowe Price and Vanguard owns ten and nine percent of Tractor Supply’s corporate shares, respectively. Mr. Boschert questioned Tractor Supply’s contributions to organizations such as FFA and 4-H and Mr. Knoll responded Tractor Supply contributed approximately \$3,000,000 last year. Mr. Boschert spoke of his experience as an investment advisor and of his recognition of corporate public relations displays. Mr. Boschert said Tractor Supply’s stock is down twenty-five percent since last June, while the S & P 500 is up thirteen percent. Mr. Knoll said as a private developer he cannot speak to that. Mr. Boschert stated Mr. Knoll is here “taking the flack” and not Tractor Supply’s management.

An unidentified female audience member stated there are Tractor Supply stores in nearby cities and Wimberley has mom and pop shops that have the same merchandise as Tractor Supply. She said Tractor Supply would put them out of business. She said she will not shop in a Wimberley Tractor Supply. Mr. Knoll stated that a locally-owned California feed store’s business increased when a Tractor Supply was built across the street. He explained the developer’s role in Tractor Supply’s real estate acquisition and development process. The speaker said it would be a travesty to public input if this was “a done deal.” She took issue with Mr. Knoll’s earlier comments that the community benefits from Tractor Supply because it will cause people to spend money at other stores. She worried about the store’s aesthetics and lighting and noted that existing local stores provide a lot of charitable contributions. She spoke of Wimberley as the jewel of central Texas and recalled how these local businesses came together after the 2015 flood to bring this city back. She asked Council and Planning and Zoning what they want this town to look like and how they represent constituents. She spoke of her different experiences with local businesses versus Tractor Supply, with local stores helping her by name and special ordering for her needs. She said she does not want corporate box stores.

Judy Bradbury asked for a show of hands of everyone who wants Tractor Supply to be here and those who want to keep Wimberley “Wimberley.” She spoke of her love for Wimberley and King Feed, Ace Hardware, and Cragg’s. She told Council we have everything we need here. She appreciated that Tractor Supply has tried to “stay with our look,” but said she really does not need a Tractor Supply here. She noted potential traffic problems, especially on Ranch Road 12, and felt having a Tractor Supply would take away from the beauty of the drive to Wimberley from the Junction.

Linda Kaye Rogers said it is an unfortunate situation for Tractor Supply messengers and hoped they are not shocked by the message that they are not wanted or needed. She expressed concerns about the amount of impervious cover, her own experience as a 4-H member who depended on local feed stores, and her intent to no longer purchase from Tractor Supply. She did not feel

people will shop at Tractor Supply and spoke of Wimberley's uniqueness. She advised the developers that Tractor Supply will not prosper here and to think seriously about that.

Tonda Frady spoke of her love for small-town Wimberley and desire to keep it as the jewel it is. She expressed concerns about traffic, TxDOT's study of the area, big box architecture, impact on local businesses, and need to support local businesses. She spoke of her active membership in the Civic Club and Wimberley Village Library and said Tractor Supply only helps select groups. She asked for information on how much money goes to local communities where there are Tractor Supply stores. She stated her conversations with some who have expressed that Tractor Supply will cause local businesses to lower prices. She said local businesses charge only what they need to in order to stay in business. She was baffled why Tractor Supply would put a store here when they are already in Dripping Springs and San Marcos. She favored a community petition to gauge how people in Wimberley feel. She said "we don't need you, we don't want you, please go somewhere else where your services are needed."

Casey Craig thanked Council and Planning and Zoning for their service. She asked if certain marked trees would be cut down. Mr. Knoll indicated the markings were for survey/identification purposes and said a very low percentage of overall trees would be removed for the building and parking area. Ms. Craig asked if Tractor Supply will have a large amount of outdoor inventory, as is the case at its Dripping Springs and Buda locations. Mr. Knoll said there would be some outdoor trailer storage; however, it would be screened in accordance with City ordinance. Mr. Knoll said all the trees shown are existing canopy. Ms. Craig asked Mr. Knoll if the property contract approval is contingent on City Council approval of the development. Mr. Knoll replied affirmatively. Ms. Craig said Wimberley incorporated to prevent big box chains and this proposed store is subject to strict Zoning Code and Scenic Corridor requirements. She also quoted text from Wimberley's Comprehensive Plan relating to support for locally owned small businesses and preservation of small town character. She asked that City Council and Planning and Zoning enforce our ordinances and uphold our Comprehensive Plan.

King Feed owner Chris Nichols spoke of his long history as a Wimberley resident and business owner. He did not feel Tractor Supply will help our community. He cited personal research that indicated when a large corporate store moves into a small town, there is no economic growth or employee growth. He said Tractor Supply will make a lot of money and businesses in town won't. He said employees, who are family and friends, will lose their jobs. Mr. Nichols noted his own store's expansion using all local workers and in accordance with City regulations. Mr. Nichols described Wimberley as an oasis where people do not expect big box stores, but come to enjoy artists, music, and sculpture. Mr. Nichols said everything King Feed makes stays in this community. He referenced a Facebook posting describing Wimberley as magical.

Mike Sullivan asked if any Tractor Supply officers/employees are present at tonight's meeting. Mr. Knoll replied negatively. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Knoll where he is based and Mr. Knoll replied in Marble Falls. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Knoll if all of his work is for Tractor Supply and Mr. Knoll replied that a large portion is. Mr. Sullivan said he is a 40-year manufacturer's representative with a pretty significant sales agency. He said there are a number of regional farm and ranch chains among his customers and cited complaints that this business is over-merchandised with too many locations. Mr. Sullivan said Tractor Supply is a publicly traded company that is still acting on a model that is largely being discredited by the business world, as there are not enough slices in the pie for this to be a genuinely profitable store. He said this

project is not intended to succeed, but to be window dressing for a whole financial scheme of a publicly traded company that does not pertain to the vitality of this community in any way, shape, or form. Mr. Sullivan spoke of the highly competitive mercantile world of farm and ranch that is very low margin, takes substantial volume to make any money at all, and felt Tractor Supply might fail in a few years and be an albatross around our necks.

Suzanne White spoke on increased Ranch Road 12 traffic and cited her personal research on TxDOT accident statistics that she offered to email to anyone who wished to receive it.

An unidentified female audience member said “We are here representing the young people of this community.” She said people do not move here for convenience and wanted to keep this town special. She said we do not want to live in Buda or Kyle and want to keep Wimberley beautiful and local.

An unidentified female audience member referred to herself and her husband as UT students who chose Wimberley as a place to buy a retirement home in 1978. She noted all the changes here and said Wimberley has a lot in common with Lafayette, Louisiana, where she owns another home. She feared that tourism-based Wimberley is fast turning into a bedroom community, which is what has happened in Lafayette. She spoke of her master’s degree in Urban Planning and asked to think in terms of long-term consequences versus short-term amenities. She detailed Lafayette’s pattern of growth and decline over the years and cited the change in its flavor. She asked to look at progress and question if it is going to be beneficial and favored keeping Wimberley as a place where people want to come to.

Linda Kaye Rogers spoke again on her belief that Tractor Supply will have a very difficult time making it here and was concerned about “that building that we are going to be stuck with.” She said it will be an eyesore to begin with. She encouraged Council and Planning and Zoning to think about what will happen if Tractor Supply does not make it.

Wimberley Hills POA President Bill Dowling expressed concerns regarding traffic and neighborhood consensus is opposed to Tractor Supply. He was also concerned about lighting and impact on small businesses. He did not feel a variance should be allowed for a large building given the amount of opposition.

Sandy Pellerin spoke on the impact to her view, if she has to look at Tractor Supply and its outdoor inventory. She noted a gate installed at the entrance to her property that people still stop and use as a turn around on a curve. She feared more accidents with large trucks on a narrow road. Mr. Pellerin said if Tractor Supply moves in, he will sell, despite his family’s long history in Wimberley.

Tim Thompson appreciated the presentation and the service of Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. He spoke of his family’s long history as Wimberley residents. He said people come from far and wide to visit Wimberley. He said this is an opportunity to keep Wimberley from becoming like many suburbs. He spoke of the shared life and lasting relationships in kinder, gentler small towns, where there are no chains, high-rise condos, or wall to wall traffic. He felt Wimberley is at a crossroads to preserve its meticulously crafted and

defended lifestyle for future generations. He hoped to join together to protect Wimberley's unique character and keep a "little bit of heaven" intact.

Billy Clyde spoke of his lengthy retail work experience and cited surveys showing that big box stores have fewer staff persons who do not know their products well. He said the first person customers meet in a big box store is the cashier and the manager stays in the office. He said retail stores here have people who are kind, gentle, know their products, and go the extra yard to keep business here and take care of customers. He felt in bigger stores, people do business there, but do not build relationships.

Brandon Metcalf said one nuance was overlooked by tonight's speakers on reasons to oppose the development, namely that Tractor Supply did not send an "A game" presenter on what Tractor Supply was going to do for this town. He said the presentation was lackluster at best, which he felt is a direct reflection of how much Tractor Supply cares about this town. He questioned why a corporate person was not sent to give the presentation.

A resident of Wimberley Hills expressed concerns about the lack of yard area relative to the store's building when compared to other area Tractor Supply stores. He said Tractor Supply might have to extend its yard area and take down more trees. He noted that Tractor Supply stores have a lot of outside inventory to lure customers in and said the yard area of the proposed Wimberley store is not a normal representation of a usual Tractor Supply store.

An unidentified audience member spoke on free enterprise and said the majority is not always right. She said it is a matter of civil rights and we have people up here who took an oath to uphold the Constitution. Speaking to Tractor Supply representatives, the speaker said it appears "you are not welcome here." She said she has seen development coming here since 2003 and has heard of protectionism as relating to business. She spoke of her love for her country and the principles upon which it was founded and grew, namely free enterprise. She said "it's no wonder we're turning communist." She said free enterprise is what keeps prices down and appreciated businesses that are here. She thanked Tractor Supply representatives for trying to come into this community and promote the American dream.

Rocky Boschert spoke of the America dream as becoming the American nightmare, because of the concept called "socialize the costs, and privatize the profits," which means free market ideologues want to use tax dollars. He said corporate welfare is a real problem in this country. He supported publicly traded companies, but said there are some that are predators, that come to small towns like Wimberley, with a small population and numerous businesses already providing many of the same products that Tractor Supply offers, then become predatory, and are hurting the local economy. He exchanged comments with Council/Planning and Zoning about having preconceived notions and responses confirmed that Council is here to get information and does not have any preconceptions about the development. Mayor McCullough noted that the first public hearing on Tractor Supply will be on March 9th. Councilmember Barchfeld also noted this is the first detailed information received by Council (as of this afternoon).

City Administrator Ferguson explained that the City has an obligation to accept and process zoning applications and to present such applications to the Planning and Zoning Commission for recommendations to City Council, before Council takes action on the application. He outlined

the statutory public hearing process, including notices on two required public hearings, with the first to be held on March 9th by the Planning and Zoning Commission, which may act by making a recommendation to Council (with or without modifications to the proposed ordinance) or continue consideration. He advised the notice also includes information on the second public hearing to be held on March 16th by City Council (unless continued by the Planning and Zoning Commission). He explained the Wimberley Planned Development District (WPDD) zoning process, which allows for more intense uses than would be allowed in the Commercial – Low Impact (C-1) zoning district. He noted if the development does not occur, zoning would remain C-1 without a WPDD. He pointed out that the proposed WPDD is viewable on the City’s website and noted several variances relating to building size/square footage, parking, and for outdoor storage. He said it is not fair to assume that Council/Planning and Zoning members have made up their minds about this project and reminded there is a public process and this is the initial step in that process. He stated Council does not have to act on March 16th and has the ability to continue action, if it so desires.

An audience member asked a question about filing protests and City Administrator Ferguson explained the public notification process, including letters to owners within 200-feet, a notice published in the local newspaper, and a sign placed on the property. He said comments on the proposed zoning can be received by anyone, however, those property owners within 200-feet have somewhat more of “a hammer” due to the “Twenty-Percent Rule.” He explained details of the Twenty-Percent Rule and noted that should that threshold of opposition be met, a super majority vote of Council would be required to approve the proposed zoning. City Administrator Ferguson clarified for an audience member the difference between a variance request and a WPDD application. He noted certain guidelines that Council and Planning and Zoning must follow in their decision-making processes.

Jo Kathryn Quinn asked Council to be brave leaders after hearing from the community tonight and vote for the community and against Tractor Supply.

A 13-year Wimberley resident asked Council to consider setting precedents and said once you grant variances you are making an exception to the Code that other people in town must adhere to. As a side note, the speaker said it is not the big corporations that are the job creators, it is consumers.

Rodger Marion spoke on the City’s entry corridors and said the zoning we have now is aimed at smaller businesses that help the corridor remain scenic. He strongly urged that no variances be allowed in these corridors, because once you allow them, you end up with a lot of stores in scenic corridors we are trying to preserve.

Planning and Zoning Commission Chair John Urban encouraged public input at its March 9th meeting. City Administrator Ferguson advised that those who cannot come to meetings may submit written correspondence to him via email or drop off at City Hall.

Councilmember White asked that those wishing to attend Planning and Zoning or Council meetings to organize their thoughts, as there are speaking time limits.

Councilmember Fore noted the formal public hearings are at 6 p.m. and will be held at Wimberley Community Center, due to crowd size.

Councilmember Trapp said the public’s written record is very important and to make sure to ask comments get read into the official record.

Councilmember Barchfeld thanked everyone, spoke of Council’s oath, assured the public is heard, and reminded this is the first step in the procedural process.

Mayor McCullough thanked everyone for coming tonight.

No action was taken.

Adjournment: Joint City Council/Planning and Zoning Commission joint meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Recorded by:

Cara McPartland
Cara McPartland

These minutes approved on the 16th of March, 2017.

APPROVED:



Mac McCullough, Mayor

