

WISCONSIN DELLS EVENTS



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Timeshare resort changes site



An engineering drawing shows how the planned Silverleaf timeshare resort will stretch across River Road. The entrance will be on Highway 13.

By Kay James, Dells Events

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Silverleaf Resorts announced a change in plans at the Wisconsin Dells Plan Commission Tuesday for its timeshare resort on River Road including a change in the site.

Nancy Leary Haggerty, an attorney with Michael Best & Friedrich, a Milwaukee law firm representing Silverleaf, said the resort asked the city to annex several properties last May and its developer's agreement was contingent on purchasing those property. "Silverleaf is still going forward," she said but the site has changed because option to buy the former Artist's Glen property and another property have expired. Instead the resort has purchased property from Richard and Mary Buckminster.

The plan commission approved annexing the Buckminster property into the city, and that annexation will go to the city council for its approval on Feb. 16. The commission also approved terminating the former developer's agreement, but put off action on a new developer's agreement until March because of some reservations about the development and conditional use permit language.

Bradley R. Boettcher, an engineer with General Engineer of Portage, then outlined the plans for the new site. The resort will have fewer buildings, but the design of the buildings will be the same, he said. It will have 448 units instead of 616 as proposed last year.

Access to the resort from Highway 13 will be near Pamper Pets on Highway 13 and the resort will also connect to River Road. Parts of the resort will be on both sides of River Road, and Boettcher said a four-way stop will be put in to cross River Road. The Highway 13 road will also provide access to the Wisconsin Sports Center, owned by Chula Vista, when Chula Vista puts in a short section of the road at its expense.

Commissioner and Alderperson Dan Gavinski raised concerns about storm water runoff into Coldwater Canyon. The much of the resort will be on the edge of the canyon. Gavinski said a lot of damage is done to the walkways in the canyon already because of runoff. "It's an ongoing project to keep up with it," said Gavinski, owner of Dells Boat Tours which leases the canyon itself.

"I'm concerned about the water flow. Coldwater Canyon is a pretty significant place and needs protection," Commissioner Bill Brown said.

Any developments will be 50 feet from the canyon, Haggerty said. The developer will have to design stormwater retention ponds to account for a 25 or 50 year storm to limit runoff into the canyon, said Mayor Eric Helland, chairman of the commission. Boettcher said he will walk through the canyon with Gavinski to see what can be designed to slow flow of water through the canyon. Commissioner Mike Freel raised concerns about pedestrians walking across River Road and using River Road to go to other parts of the Dells. He suggested a tunnel under the road or bridge over the road, like some golf courses have. He also said that once people learn the shortcut to the Dells by River Road they would use that rather than River Road. Concerns were also raised about the speed limit on River Road, but Police Chief Bret Anderson said most of River Road is already at 25 mph. "I don't see anything we can't work out," he added.

Brown questioned a phrase in the proposed development agreement that said, "any other conditional use permits or authorizations needed for the developer to operate the property for the developer's permitted use." He said that phrase made it "look like we are going to give you the barn." Haggerty said that phrase could be removed from the agreement. Brown also asked where the conditional use permits were, which were cited on the agenda but not presented to the commission with the other documents relating to the development. Assistant Public Works Director Chris Tollaksen said Silverleaf will apply for conditional use permits needed for the height of the buildings and for timeshares. They will be considered in March.

The commission Tuesday also recommended approval of a permanent conditional use permit for the Caboose Restaurant, 223 Wisconsin Avenue, owned by Antoni Wolan. He has had a one-year conditional use permit to open the restaurant in 2002 and in 2005 a three year permit was granted. Commissioner Brown raised an objection to the permanent permit because the restaurant has violated the city's sign ordinance by putting up temporary signs. Gavinski disagreed. He said the conditional use permit and the sign ordinance were separate. Wolan has brought something unique to the community, and should not be penalized for doing one thing wrong, Gavinski said. If a sign is wrong, he should be fined \$100 for that violation like others in the city. "You're certainly not afraid to fine me \$100," he said referring to a fine the boats had received for a temporary sign. The commission approved the permanent conditional use permit unanimously and it must also receive council approval.

In other action, the commission did the following:

Took the first step in approving vacating an alley next to Trinity Lutheran Church. Public Works Director Mike Horkan said the city should charge fees to cover attorney fees and costs of paperwork when alleys or streets are vacated to cover the city's costs. Mayor Eric Helland in referring the question of a fee to the council's finance committee quipped, "We've taken care of the Catholics and the Lutherans and now we will charge."

Discussed the need to align a map in the city's comprehensive plan showing future land use around the city with the city's zoning map. The question will be discussed at next month's meeting March 11 at 5:15 p.m.