

Monroe County Board of Appeals December 13, 2023

The Monroe County Zoning Board of Appeals met December 13, 2023, in the Monroe County Court House, Waterloo, Illinois, with the following members present: Dennis Rodenberg, George Obernagel, Vicki Taake, Mike Kovarik, and Russell Gregson. Also, present: Chris Voelker, George Green, Eric Sutton, and Laura Kipping.

Dennis Rodenberg opened the Public Hearing concerning Travis and Laura Neiheisel who are requesting a Special Use Exception to operate a dog boarding and training facility. The property is located on H Road, Waterloo, Illinois. Parcel #08-33-400-008-000. The present zone classification is A-1.

Denise Marshall read the letter of intent.

We submit this packet for your review to approve a Special Use Permit for Parcel #08-33-400-008-000 to operate a dog boarding and training facility, which will go by the name "The Dog Ranch."

Travis was in the Air Force for 13 years. Our time in the military took us to places we would have never been otherwise and it shaped our lives forever. We are grateful for the assignments and people we've met along the way. We were often stationed in southern, rural settings where dogs roamed their properties, played in the water and sunbathed for hours. Many dogs still had jobs on ranches and were the most content dogs we've seen! This story is shown in our logo inspiration,

The "dog ranch experience" focuses on letting dogs be dogs with plenty of time outside, quality rest, open spaces to safely roam, and enrichment. We truly believe in species-appropriate opportunities for dogs. Regardless of how canines have evolved, these needs haven't changed. We also believe that many behavioral problems in dogs we see today can be reduced with the correct environment and outlets.

Laura has trained dogs for over 14 years and has two, current dog training businesses out of state. We believe the need is here in our community to offer a safe and high-quality boarding experience for dogs in the area that keeps business local. We care deeply about every dog that will come to The Dog Ranch and are focused on giving them a wonderful experience.

Dennis Rodenberg sworn in those wishing to speak.

- Laura Neiheisel – When we first presented we had the building in front. We did listen and will now be 700' from the road.

- George Obernagel – Are they concerns or issue with the road.
- Mike Kovarik – Spoke with Aaron Metzger this morning about it.
- Aaron Metzger – No issues. Their entrance permit is for a resident. They will need a new entrance permit for a business.
- Aaron Metzger – Would have been brought up in the Planning Commission but they didn't have a quorum.
- George Obernagel – Are you looking to build in the future? When?
- Travis Neiheisel – Looking at financing now.
- Chris Voelker – Showed on the map where the building will be. The old location and the new one after listening to the neighbor's concerns.
- Laura Neiheisel – Will not be doing dog daycare. It will just be longer term boarding.
- Mike Kovarik – The quantity will be 10 dogs?
- Laura Neiheisel – Yes
- George Obernagel – It will just be dogs?
- Laura Neiheisel – I do have horses, but they are for personal use.
- Keith Kraus – Lot 8 right at the corner. Concerned that it is a business, and it will open up a can of worms for other businesses coming in. It is a quiet neighborhood. Already have trouble with the road and how fast they drive. Not sure what size trucks they will have coming. Concerned someone will go in the ditch if big trucks come on the road. Is it temporary or long term?
- Dennis Rodenberg – As long as they own the property and it is approved.
- Chris Voelker – It is a permitted Special Use.
- Keith Kraus – So it could turn into a big business use.
- Russell Gregson – It has to meet the criteria.
- Laura Neiheisel – Will not have big trucks. With 10 dogs or less and different start and end days, we anticipate about 3 additional cars per day.
- Mike Kovarik – Is there any concerns from the Health Department
- Chris Voelker – Plan is to bag and dumpster the waste. Bathroom would have to have a septic system
- Dennis Rodenberg – They will be required to have a bathroom.
- Chris Voelker – Pointed the property on the Google Map.
- George Obernagel – There are no neighbors besides across the street
- Chris Voelker – There is a new house being built on the same side.
- Laura Neiheisel – 600 feet for the house to the road. About 700 to the outbuilding.
- Erica Avellone – Speak as a character witness. Share the love of children and animals. Shared information on horses and chicken to assist with their homeschool teaching. They have gone through a lot over the past couple of years and overcame that. They are involved in their church and homeschool community. Great neighbor and friend.
- Emma Hosfeld – They are the kind of business owners I want in my community. Her business proposal is what the county needs. Clients ask for boarding and training recommends. Her property is a perfect location. Complaints of noise or eye sore is not warranted.
- Rory Renk – President of the Willow Lake HOA. Appreciates the changes and listening to our concerns. Still have some concerns. Conditions the county set for Special Use Exceptions, feels that this can be good or bad. Hopes the county considers the items they

are concerned about. Doesn't believe that everyone is opposed. Wishes there be special conditions, like timeline for it to be reviewed.

- Gary Conway – Serves on the HOA board. Thinks it can be good and bad. Concerned about drainage and waste control. What can future owners do? Can they expand it?
- Travis Neiheisel – If the property sells so does it.
- Vicki Taake – The Special Use is just to them.
- Lois Leibert - Property to the north. If this is approved for one building can they in the future get approval for more buildings. I heard the word roaming being read. Concerned about dogs being free and roaming.
- Laura Neiheisel – All dogs will be under supervision and in at least a 6' fence. Always contained or leashed.
- Dennis Rodenberg – If they decide to add more buildings they have to come back.
- Chris Voelker – they would have to go through this all again
- Sam Killingsworth – Also building a spot for the horses?
- Travis Neiheisel – There will be a small place for them
- Sam Killingsworth – In the letter of intent you mentioned behavior. Are you taking on behavior dogs?
- Laura Neiheisel – I will not be taking on biting concerns. Clients have to complete a questionnaire
- Jeannie Pederson – Read a letter of support. Known them for 5 years. They are an asset to Monroe County. They take excellent care of their own animals.
- Caley Homrighausen – Here in support of Travis and Laura. Lived in Willow Estate. Building on the property adjacent to Travis and Laura. The increased traffic is not a concern. Doesn't believe a maximum of 10 people back and forth aren't going to make a difference. The Amazon driver comes more. Our house is the closest. We aren't concerned about the noise. We aren't in the HOA so we don't have to follow the restrictions of a subdivision. We live in the country. There is a need for a dog kennel in Monroe County. The two that are in the Country are always booked up. I commend Travis and Laura going about this the right way. They aren't trying to make a huge commercial business.

Motion by Mike Kovarik, second George Obernagel to approve the Special Use Exception by Travis and Laura Neiheisel to operate a dog training and boarding facility with three provisions; business entrance way permit obtained, reviewed and renewed in two years, and maximum 10 dogs. The property is located on H Road, Waterloo, Illinois. Parcel #08-33-400-008-000. Yes – 5, No – 0. Motion passed.

Motion by Vicki Taake, second George Obernagel to approve the minutes of November 1, 2023. All aye by voice vote.

Motion by George Obernagel, second Russell Gregson to adjourn. All aye by voice vote.

Next meeting – January 3, 2024 – 7:30 pm