

## **7.02: Review Concept for Commercial Horse Farm Located at 17209 Saint Francis Blvd. NW; Case of Dale Wills**

City Planner Anderson reviewed the staff report. He noted that the Planning Commission also reviewed this concept plan at their regular January meeting. Questions arose regarding the size of the manure composting area, the size of the pasture area, as well as whether any employees would be living on the subject property. Additionally, concerns were noted about the amount of traffic coming through an existing residential neighborhood and the potential loss of existing trees. He stated that the potential buyer is looking for any feedback from the City on this concept before proceeding with the purchase of the subject property.

Dale Wills, 2176 157<sup>th</sup> Lane in Andover, stated that the current landowner is also present tonight. He stated that there was a community meeting and Planning Commission meeting at which time a lot of questions were answered from the neighbors and input was received to improve the plan. He stated that his family would like to relocate to Ramsey and would like to be able to conduct horse therapy, which would focus on benefiting those aged 14 to 25. He stated that there is a lot of data that there are great benefits for certain ailments (anxiety and autism) in using horses for therapeutic purposes. He stated that they have seen the benefit to their own children and would like to make that available to a larger audience of people. He stated that young people could come in, individually, to work with a horse trainer to help that individual build a relationship with the horse that helps to translate into building other skills that assist in mental health. He stated that the people seeking the treatment sessions would receive their session in return for volunteer work on the site. He stated that the process could grow to hold shows periodically, which would allow those that have gained skills to display for family members. He reviewed some of the concerns that were brought up at the public meeting, which included manure management, traffic management, the protection of Ford Brook and Trott Brook, and the number of horses. He provided details on the manure management plan that they would have. He stated that one of the resources that draws him to the property is Ford Brook and his intention would be to protect that feature and hopefully provide improvement. He acknowledged that there would be additional traffic in the neighborhood but hoped to minimize the impact to neighbors. He stated that they would anticipate around 35 horses for the operation. He stated that his goal is to receive feedback to determine if there are improvements that they can make to their plan and whether the Council would support the plan moving forward.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that this is an exciting plan and the site plan seems to take into account the concerns of manure management that were brought up by the neighboring residents. She stated that although there would be additional traffic, a traditional residential development on this property would most likely bring in more traffic. She stated that she has seen the business model of horse therapy to be very successful with youth experiencing mental health concerns and autism.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is excited to see this move forward and believes that this would be a great addition to the community.

Councilmember Shryock echoed the comments of support. She stated that looking at the general site plan, perhaps the applicant could develop a circular driveway connection from Potassium to Sodium that would allow for traffic to have multiple access points for times when there are larger events.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she also is excited about this option, noting that she grew up on a farm and agrees that there are benefits for youth. She asked where parking would occur for events.

Mr. Wills replied that the small parking area would be used for the instructors and individuals participating in sessions. He stated that the intent for events would be for parking to occur along the edges of the driveway. He noted that a pasture could also be opened and mowed to allow for additional parking for events.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that this seems to be a very compatible use for the area and allows the community to follow the goal of embracing the rural character of the community in some areas while continuing to provide urban services in other areas.

Mr. Wills stated that the staff has been wonderful to work with throughout this project and another project that he has worked on in Ramsey.