

MUNICIPALITY OF MONROEVILLE

ZONING HEARING BOARD

JULY 3, 2024

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Michael Gaydos at 7:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

The Recording Secretary, Sharon McIndoe, called roll and the following were present: Michael Gaydos, Larry D'Agostino, Heather Wilkins, Robert Hutchison, Bruce Dice and Paul Whealdon. Mr. Whitfield was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There being no corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes of the May 1, 2024 meeting, Mr. D'Agostino duly made a motion to approve them, as submitted, and Mrs. Wilkins seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

24-10-A

JOHN CALDWELL

The applicant is requesting a Special Exception as per Article XII, Section 1211.C.1, Apiaries, of the Monroeville Zoning Ordinance No. 2779, to establish an apiary (beehive colony). The property is located at 4412 Gateway Drive, Tax Parcel 854-G-069, in the R-2, Single/Multi-Family Residential Zoning District.

Mr. John Caldwell, the applicant, came forward to explain his request. He reviewed how he always wanted to set up a couple of apiaries so he and his wife decide to go forward. He explained his wife called last year before the ordinance was changed and nothing was required so he ordered his bees. He stated he already has the bees. He explained the difference between bees, yellow jackets and ground bees and wasps. He stated bees are very docile and the other ones are aggressive.

Mr. Gaydos inquired whether he complied with the requirements in the code concerning the distance and Mr. Caldwell answered affirmatively. He added he took all the classes and he has his license from the state.

Mr. Dice inquired where the bees are currently located and Mr. Caldwell answered they are in their hive. He explained how once it is started it has to move forward because of time constraints. He stated it is not a small investment.

Mr. D'Agostino inquired where the bees are from and Mr. Caldwell answered there are from a local apiary in Plum, Pennsylvania, Festa Family Farms. He explained how you can get a nucleus which is

the beginning of a hive with the queen, workers and drones then they multiply and it expands into a hive. He also explained they can be ordered by the bag on line or you can get a swarm. Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether it would keep growing and Mr. Caldwell explained they will grow to their environment. He stated if they get too big, they will split and go off to another hive. Mr. D'Agostino inquired about the number of hives he has now and Mr. Caldwell answered two. Mr. D'Agostino questioned how many he wants to have and Mr. Caldwell answered he does not want any more than four. He explained his property is approximately a half an acre. He reported he would like two or three then he could split them and sell.

Mr. Dice inquired whether he got any honey yet and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively. He was uncertain whether he would get any honey this year because the bees may be storing it currently to get through the winter.

Mr. Gaydos inquired where they are located in his yard. He pointed out his yard, street and house and stated they are located in the back yard. He added it is not an eye sore for people driving by.

Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether they were in the middle of the yard and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively. He stated they are located in the back. Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether they were in the middle of the yard and not closer to either neighbor and Mr. Caldwell answered they are located in the middle of his yard. Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether there are issues with either neighbor and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively. Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether he would be the main beekeeper and Mr. Caldwell answered it would be he and his wife. Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether she is certified and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively.

Mr. Gaydos inquired how often the hives have to be taken care of and Mr. Caldwell answered every couple of days. He reviewed how bees can get diseases which can be devastating to them then the hives have to be burned to get rid of it.

Mr. Dice asserted it is low maintenance and Mr. Caldwell agreed.

Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether the bees fly around and leave the hive and come back and Mr. Caldwell answered affirmatively. He showed the bee hive frames that go in the hives and stated the nesting colony is located in the bottom. Mr. Caldwell reported there is not a lot of activity in the winter because the bees are hibernating but they can come out. He explained how you can put bee bread or pollen paddies in the hive to sustain them through the winter. Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether he had any pictures of his current hive and Mr. Caldwell answered affirmatively.

Mr. Whealdon reported there was no correspondence in favor or opposed to the application.

Mr. Caldwell showed a picture of his hives and pointed out at the bottom where the bees go in and out. He reported he has a restrictor to keep mice and other creatures from getting in and causing damage. He explained it was too small so he had to replace it which is why the bees are congregating because they could not get in. Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether it is sitting on cinder blocks and Mr. Caldwell answered affirmatively. He stated he has two and there are two sections. He explained the bottom part is the brood and the upper one is where the honey will be located. He showed a diagram with the dimensions. He pointed out the section with the brood and the excluder. He explained year around the bees can go wherever they want and the queen can go anywhere. He stated the males are the drones and do nothing until they meet with the queen then die and the rest are females. He

explained he puts the excluder in until it is time to get the honey because the bees only live about five or six weeks. He stated the excluder is put in so the queen cannot get into the honey section so there will not be brood in with the honey when it is time to remove it.

Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether there is only one queen per hive and Mr. Caldwell answered affirmatively. Mr. D'Agostino questioned whether he would have more queens if he has three or four hives and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively. He explained if the queen is no longer productive a new queen is made. Mr. D'Agostino inquired whether he would sell honey and Mr. Caldwell answered negatively. Mr. D'Agostino inquired how much honey comes from a hive and Mr. Caldwell answered approximately 80 pounds of honey for a productive hive per year. He briefly explained the process and reported a pint of honey takes approximately 960 bees lifetime work. He reported he took his course from Penn State and they reported that 80 to 95 percent of the world's foodstuff is dependent on the bees doing their pollination. He explained how the animals forge on the greenery which depends on the bees. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Eric Peterson, a resident of Gateway Drive, came forward in favor of the application. He reported world-wide pollenating bee populations are down in nature. He explained how when he traveled west to various states, all the ranches have giant stacks of white boxes and they hire people to bring in the pollinators. He stated it is not about the honey but the crops and he felt this is a blessing. He explained anything that is perennial or certain annuals have to have it. He mentioned the wood boring bees that punch holes in houses but this is different and the bees are docile. He reported they go out about a mile and pollenate and come back and make honey which is the by-product. He stated the actual product that has to be pollinated for the next season is done by the bees. Further discussion ensued.

Whereupon, Mr. D'Agostino duly made a motion to approve Application No. 24-10-A and Mrs. Wilkins seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gaydos wished everyone a happy Fourth of July and encouraged everyone to attend the parade at 9 a.m. rain or shine.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the zoning hearing board, at this time, a motion was duly made by Mr. Hutchison to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 and Mr. Gaydos seconded it. Upon a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Gaydos
Chairman

MG/sam

