

## District 99 Land Mess

District 99 is trying to sell its 45 acres in Woodridge. However, even though a 1978 District letter states that the selling price would be determined by appraisal, the District hired, and is paying thousands of dollars for an advisor firm to put the property up for bid. Now some people might say "do whatever you can to get as much as you can," which is what the bidding process is designed to do, but District 99 officials used very questionable judgment in taking the bidding approach in this situation.

The property is currently zoned to allow approximately 37 homes. But the firm marketing the property created a design which shows a 202 unit multi family project. And it has been reported that they have advised potential bidders to ignore the Village's Master Plan, which calls for open space for this property, and that any bidder would prevail in a zoning lawsuit to permit intensive development. Woodridge does not want multi units on this property and every District 99 Administrator and Board member knows it.

In an effort to (1) have District 99 live up to the 1978 commitment of selling the land based upon an appraisal, (2) avoid lengthy and costly zoning battles with a developer, and (3) to avoid District 99's attempt to force an intolerable land use, or extort Woodridge to stop the development, the Village of Woodridge condemned District 99's 45 acres on May 19, 2005. This means that Woodridge will purchase the property at a value determined by a court and based upon the current 37 home zoning.

Problem 1: It seems incompetent to me that 99 officials did not anticipate that Woodridge would condemn the property. Problem 2: proposing a multi unit complex in the heart of Woodridge has infuriated and alienated approximately 1/3 of District 99's residents. This insulting action has driven a wedge between Downers Grove and Woodridge and will be remembered for a long time. Problem 3: I do not believe many Woodridge residents will support a future District 99 referendum until this Administration is replaced.

I believe the 99 Board needs to determine how they will repair the strained relationship they have created with Woodridge. Although their selling strategy and negotiation technique was legal, as residents, I think we need to think about whether or not it was ethical in light of the outcome. In negotiations, some tactics are acceptable and some are not. I believe District 99 leadership has taken the latter.

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