

Firm's request returned to panel

By Don Grigas
Staff writer

A request for variances by the owner of a 17-acre Bolingbrook site near Murphy Road and Woodward Avenue being used as a landscape and construction materials recycling transfer station has been sent back to the Bolingbrook Plan Commission for further review.

At the Sept. 27 Village Board meeting, trustees voted 5-0 to rescind the request, a move that pleased some Woodridge resi-

dents who have protested several aspects of the business's operation.

"That's good. I think it is a sign that he (Mayor Roger Claar) is sincere about researching this more and finding answers before taking action," said Donna Longbehn, a resident of Downers Grove Township who lives near the site.

Donna and Larry Longbehn were among more than 200 Woodridge-area residents who attended a special meeting Sept. 26 in Bolingbrook to discuss the issue with Claar, one day before the Village Board's decision.

At that meeting several questions were raised by concerned citizens, prompting Claar to promise to review the matter further.

"This will be sent back to the Plan Commission for further considerations," Claar said at both the Sept. 26 special meeting and the Sept. 27 board meeting, which was attended by just a few Woodridge residents. "There are several questions that we feel weren't properly answered, and these will be researched by our staff, which will prepare a report and return it to us for action."

No firm date was given when the Village Board might reconsider the issue, although Claar said another public hearing would take place prior to the Plan Commission and Village Board taking action.

"Once it has been researched thoroughly the Plan Commission will send it back to the board for action; what that action might be we don't know, because that depends on the responses to the questions," Claar said.

Claar said the village would require the property owner to erect fencing as a security measure and add landscape elements to partially screen the facility from view.

The site is at 499 Murphy Road, east of the North-South Tollway and adjacent to Woodward Avenue. It borders the corporate limits of Woodridge, and is close to residential developments built by Gallagher and Henry east and south of the site.

Residents living in those subdivisions said the business on the site, E.C. Rizzi & Associates Inc., is unsightly, unsafe, emanates a strong odor of manure and should not be granted variances to continue operating its business under pre-1995 Bolingbrook code amendments.

There is no fence along the perimeter of the site, which houses several mounds of construction and landscape materials.

The business takes in, recycles and sells landscape waste such as wood chips and grass clippings. It also recycles construction materials such as cement, wood, glass and drywall board.

In addition, it markets top soil that

comes in as dirt removed from development sites and is then mixed with other components for resale. It has a permit for use as a yard waste transfer site.

Among the concerns expressed by residents is that the mixing of soil elements and other materials sometimes creates foul odors of manure and other smells similar to compost and mulch.

"The smell wasn't so bad several years ago, but in the last two years it has really gotten much worse," said Tom Barker, who lives on Havens Drive in Woodridge, less than one-half mile from the site. "I think it is a positive thing they would require the property to be fenced and add landscape screening, but that won't make the smell go away."

Other questions raised Sept. 25 included what specific operations are conducted at the site; the extent of past and current site violations according to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and Will County; and why Illinois legislation passed last year requires J.R. Rizzi, owner of the business, to seek variances to move one of his operations from the Will County side of his site to the DuPage County portion.

"How do we know what types of things wind up in there and what impact they might have, such as roofing materials like tar paper and asbestos from tear-downs, things that could enter the ground water or float through the air?" Donna Longbehn asked.

Some residents complained about an increase in truck traffic near their homes, which they think signals an increase in business over the next few years.

J.R. Rizzi, owner of the business, attended the Sept. 26 meeting, but did not speak.

Rizzi, in an interview last week, said he did not expect to increase the business in the near future, and said he believes confusion exists because the business is permitted as a yard waste transfer station, but the permit is issued by the Will County Solid Waste Department.

"We are not a solid waste site; we recycle materials so they don't have to be placed in land fills," Rizzi said.

Rizzi and Claar both said the site is not a compost site.

However, the E.C. Rizzi & Associates Inc. Web site lists "Organic Yard Waste Compost" and "Mushroom Compost" among more than a dozen materials available on-site.

"He sells compost, but it is not a compost site. How can that be?" Donna Longbehn said.

Over the last 10 years the business has legally operated outside of Bolingbrook codes because it was grandfathered in under the 1991 annexation agreement.