

# Hebron livestock farm expansion opposed

By Alexa Zoellner Daily Union staff writer | Posted: Friday, June 19, 2015 10:22 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors Planning and Zoning Committee on Thursday heard from neighbors opposing a Town of Hebron farm increasing its operation to handle 4,766 cattle.

However, due to state laws regarding livestock facility siting, the committee was unable to take public input into account.

Katzman Farms Inc., located at W3223 Hoffman Road in the Town of Hebron, sought a conditional-use permit to “allow expansion of an existing intensive ag operation for up to 4,766 animal units” on a total of 83.52 acres. The area is zoned A-1 Exclusive Agricultural and the farm’s current conditional-use permit, which was obtained amid controversy in October 2014, allows it to operate with 2,630 cattle.

Robert Klotz, director of planning and zoning, administered Thursday’s public hearing. Committee members include Supervisors Amy Rinard; Don Reese; Steve Nass; Greg David, who was absent, and George Jaeckel, who abstained from taking part to prevent any potential conflicts of interest.

“There are three generations of Katzmans involved in the farm,” said Naomi Bernstein, an agricultural engineer who spoke on behalf of the Katzman family. “They want to expand the farm in order to have a good, strong facility for the younger generation, as well as continue to grow food for the community, and it’s an additional nutrient source for other farms to keep organic material high in the fields and continue to have very productive fields here in Jefferson County.”

Bernstein explained that there actually are multiple phases to the Katzmans’ expansion project, and this is Phase Two.

“This phase includes the addition of one free-stall barn, the expansion of another free-stall barn, the remodeling of two of the existing barns, remodeling of the parlor and the addition of a feed storage area in order to meet the needs of the additional cattle on the facility, as well as a 16-foot deep, round concrete waste-storage facility for liquid waste,” she said.

Between the two phases, the barn will have a total 385 days of manure storage capability and the ground waste storage facility will be able to contain 412 days of liquid manure, according to Bernstein. This will give the Katzmans the flexibility to spread manure when weather and field conditions are favorable.

She said the farm does have a nutrient-management plan.

As of April 1, 2015, the Katzman farm has an effective Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit issued by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Bernstein said. The farm also received its erosion-control permit this month and its high-capacity well permit in March.

Four people spoke against the expansion. There also were three letters presented to the committee whose writers were against granting the permit.

The concerns of opponents focused mainly on odor control, but also included the possibility of pollution to the Bark River and a potential decline in property values.

Steve Armin, who lives roughly three-tenths of a mile down the road from the Katzman farm, voiced his apprehension.

“The number (of animals) seem to have doubled in less than a year’s time,” Armin said, adding that water quality is something about which he worries. “I’ve always made fun of people who go to the store to buy water — I don’t want to become one of them.”

Another neighbor, Anita Oray, said she didn’t understand how a permit like this could be approved.

“No notice was sent to residences within a two-mile radius of this meeting tonight until two or three days ago,” Oray said.

She also said she feels that property values will plummet and that the odor will not be manageable in the wake of the livestock expansion.

“When is enough enough?” asked Wayne Kroll. “I can’t imagine jamming that many cattle into such a small area and calling it humane.”

His wife shared her thoughts, as well.

“The smell, even in the past has been pungent, and we live quite a distance away,” said Carol Kroll. “I’ve been on farms. Manure is not a big shock to me, but this, really, in the right conditions, especially in the summer, gets really bad.”

Bernstein rebutted.

“As part of the siting application, there is an odor component to the conditional-use application process. You have to have a minimum score of 500 in order to have your facility approved. (The Katzman farm) has 572 points, so by the state law, we pass the odor score component of the siting application,” she said.

Bernstein also explained that all three of the wells on the farm are at least 250 feet from the nearest manure handling area, which is what is required by the DNR.

One of the letters read into the record said, “(the Katzmans should be required to assure they will not pollute the Bark River.”

Members of the Katzman family present at the hearing declined to comment afterward.

Although most people seemed familiar with the law after last October, Klotz briefly explained it again.

“Our legislators in Madison have dictated and have decided how these operations are to be regulated and how the decisions are to be made,” he said. “(The farms) fill out the worksheets; they come up with the plan. (The applications) are reviewed by our Land and Water Conservation Department and the permits are issued.”

Joe Strupp, a Land and Water Conservation representative, spoke to the review of the Katzmans’ application.

“We received the application, all the materials, the engineering from the farm for the livestock siting application,”

Strupp said. "We reviewed them. The engineering we had reviewed by the Department of Agriculture engineer and found that everything they submitted meets the requirement of livestock siting."

After the hearing, Klotz explained the law, ATCP 51, further.

"It's called the livestock siting law for intensive ag operations and there's several worksheets that a farmer has to complete," he said. "They have to hire an engineer, unless they go through training, to show that they're going to handle the manure and the buildings are going to be set back certain distances and that they have a nutrient-management plan to take care of the manure that will be produced by all these animals," Klotz stated. "Basically what the state law did is they took the local control out of it and said, 'if (an applicant) completes the worksheets, and they're deemed complete by the Land and Water Conservation, then (the zoning committee has) no choice but to issue the conditional-use permit.'"

The Planning and Zoning Committee also held public hearings for five other conditional-use permits. Those included allowing mineral extraction near N6131 County Highway Y for Thomas and Kathy Gallitz; building of duplexes on four proposed lots at W1232 and W1236 Marietta Ave. for Wisconsin Furniture LLC.; the building of an extensive on-site storage structure at N3606 Riverside Lane for Sandra Punzel; the building of an extensive on-site storage structure at N8517 Pleasant Valley Lane for Laura Romlein; and for Daryl and Tammy Payne to have an intensive agricultural operation for up to 463 animal units at N4363 County Road E.

Several other routine zoning requests, such as rezoning to create new sites, also were heard.