

# WOODFORD COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Woodford County Board Room  
1837 S. Main St. Eureka, IL  
6:00 P. M. Tuesday, February 28, 2023

- Call to Order:

Ms. Gauger called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

- Roll Call: Teresa Gauger, Karen Krug, John Obery and Marty Clinch were present.

Ms. Gauger declared a quorum present.

Others present: Erik Gibson and Lisa Jording

- Approval of minutes.

January 24, 2023

Motion to approve minutes made by Clinch, seconded by Krug. *Motion Carried.*

- Swearing in/ Affirmation – Completed for each petition.

- Presentation of Petitions

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**#2023-06-S Cazenovia Township** filed January 19, 2023, by Paul Wever for a Special Use to allow a business consisting of In Vessel composting, Bio-Char production, stockpiling, green house, and shipping container storage and sales in the Agriculture District on 5.637 acres described as part of Tract F and Part of Tract K N ½ NW ¼ Section 07, T28N – R2W of the 3<sup>rd</sup> P.M. Woodford County, Illinois, and more commonly described as 811 Columbia Rd. Washburn, Illinois.

Mr. Paul Wever was sworn in.

Mr. Wever discussed that he purchased the five acres to expand his Goodfield location. He is turning intermodal shipping containers into specialized In-vessel composting devices. He would also store and sell the storage containers from this location.

He discussed that he currently composts woody biomass consisting of ground up pallets at the Goodfield location. This location would be used to store the containers, they would be transported to Goodfield for the modifications. These would be mostly “one trip” containers that would then be modified to turn food waste into compost. This composter is being designed as a result of a call for proposals from USDA/DoD for an all in one vessel composter that contains smell and deters vermin. The board asked questions over fire/combustion concerns, Mr. Wever explained that since this is in-vessel nothing is exposed to the elements, the materials loaded into the system are controlled, turned and monitored. The carbon used is woody biomass, grass clippings and leaves. Approximately 25-50 cubic yards of compost is produced per month. This site will be the test site to determine if the composter operates and would subsequently be the demonstration site if it is placed into production and sale.

There will be no environmental effects from the device, it is self-contained. There will be no runoff or leaching into the ground, the smell would filtered through carbon filters. A small catch basin would be constructed on the lot to collect rainwater and runoff. This water would be used to provide the moisture needed in the compost process.

Mr. Wever explained that he has already helped divert 30 million pounds of woody biomass from landfills at his Goodfield operation, this would help in that process. Mr. Wever stated that because this is In-vessel he does not believe it will affect the neighbors; there is no smell, it is environmentally friendly, and will have no effect on the surrounding area.

This is a small scale composting operation that would require a small utility tractor or skid steer. There would be a concrete slab to use for mixing and an area to store excess woody biomass on site. There would also be a structure to cover the completed compost. He noted that he does not intend to have more than 1- 2 containers at one time on the property. When asked about increased traffic Mr. Wever explained that he planned to have two containers initially with three more coming in the future. He would use the first two to hold the roof that would cover the finished compost. Mr. Wever explained that he does not have any devices working at this time, they are in the process of modifying the first container at this time. Mr. Wever noted that he has been using environmentally friendly processes

for 15 years, he does not want to produce compost as a business, he wants to manufacture the device to produce the compost, this is part of a grant program for the USDA/DoD and EPA. There will be other companies developing devices as well, the end goal is a device that can be used on a small scale in a small or urban space like a military base or city environment. The board asked several questions regarding ingress/egress, power, and water. Mr. Wever stated he will have standard power run to the property, the road commissioner has already approved an entrance to the property, no water well will be drilled at this time. He also noted that because the containers are empty he can use standard pick-up trucks and 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailers to haul the containers in and out. Mr. Wever explained that water remains in the container limiting water requirements. He could stack the containers but does not intend to at this property. Any gasses or smells produced will be filtered before leaving the container and the containers will be monitored remotely. The food waste will be acquired for restaurants, the woody biomass will come from the Goodfield location. They will mix approximately a 30/1 ration of carbon (woody biomass) to nitrogen (food waste) with a catalyst to speed the process. The components are mixed on the slab and then loaded into the container. He noted the food waste must be contained at all times to avoid contamination or attracting bugs and vermin, this will also contain the smell.

### INTERESTED PARTY QUESTIONS

Mr. Robert King asked if the containers have wood floors. Mr. Wever stated they did, but a metal floor would be welded over that and a water catch basin would be added to prevent leaching.

Mr. King asked if the container was sealed. Mr. Wever stated it is sealed except for the filtered air vents, oxygen is pumped in to control the process. He noted the device is specifically engineered to prevent smell and water from escaping.

Mr. Lon Atterberry asked about noise at the site. Mr. Wever stated there would be a skid steer or small tractor along with the container delivery which takes about 30 minutes.

Mr. Atterberry asked if he would be collecting rain water. Mr. Wever stated he would use a catch basin to collect the water based on the coverage of the site.

Ms. Laura Casey asked about Biochar. Mr. Wever explained that they take woody biomass and combust it in a low oxygen environment at 800 degrees to create charcoal. He stated they would bring in a small amount of biomass and burn it in a special container, they use only woody biomass to create the biochar.

Ms. Casey asked if biochar emits emissions and VOC's. Mr. Wever noted that the intent is to not create smoke and to specifically stay below the IEPA levels at which a permit is required, he stated he has been making biochar at the Goodfield facility for 10 years. This site would make enough for use on the site only.

Ms. Casey discussed that there is a potential for fire. Mr. Wever explained that the process is controlled, and the air is restricted and provided by compressed air being forced into the container. The container also preserves the environment inside. The air exiting the container will be filtered to eliminate smell.

Ms. Casey asked about the stormwater plan. Mr. Wever explained that if the project is approved he would have a stormwater control plan designed to IEPA standards and approved by the County. He discussed that they would need water for the composting process.

Mr. Michael Miller asked if anyone from the government would be coming to inspect the process. Mr. Wever stated he was not aware of any required government inspections.

Mr. Miller asked how many containers he intended to have on the site. Mr. Wever stated he was planning on no more than 10.

Mr. Miller asked about the composition of the compost material. Mr. Wever stated 20/1 to 40/1.

Mr. Wever explained the process, and explained that the slab would be scraped clean and the materials loaded into the container, it is possible a small amount of residue could remain and attract animals. The Woody biomass would likely be delivered inside the containers they haul out to the site.

Mr. Kenneth Ewe asked why this location was chosen when the applicant lives in Rutland and has an existing business in Goodfield. Mr. Wever noted this site is close to family.

Mr. Ewe asked about tracking debris onto the road. Mr. Wever explained that if that happened, they would clear the road off. Mr. Ewe asked why he chose containers. Mr. Wever noted it is the most environmentally and affordable was to build them so that non-profits can afford them.

Mr. Mike Ingram – No Questions.

Mr. Todd Taylor asked how many containers. Mr. Wever stated possibly up to 10. The number on site would be governed by the sales of the device. He noted again that this is a compost equipment manufacturing business, not a composting business.

Mr. Taylor asked if he would be living on the site. Mr. Wever stated not at this time but potentially in the future.

Mr. Richard Wallick – No Questions

Mr. Nathan Wallick how much woody biomass would be stored on site, Mr. Wever stated it just be anything leftover, maybe 10 yards. This is a small pile and is not generally enough to self-combust.

Mr. Clinch asked where the biomass would be stored. Mr. Wever stated it would be stored in the bays laid out on the concrete slab. Once food is mixed in it would go directly into the composter.

Mr. Wever was asked several questions from the board. He explained that the retention pond would be sited and designed by an engineer to meet the requirements. The odor if any would be minimal and smell like mowed grass or similar. If material is tracked onto the road it would be cleaned. The biochar would be produced approximately once a month, it takes one day to produce. Converted bus frames are used to haul the containers. This is a one of a kind operation, the only other company uses 20 ft. containers. He is developing his design based on the parameters laid out by USDA and DoD. He has not built anything like this before, but he has built things for DoD contracts in the past. This is an attempt to develop food recycling as part of a grant program.

#### INTERESTED PARTY EVIDENCE

Mr. Robert King presented that pallets have chemicals in them, rainwater can leach those chemicals in the ground and well water in the area. There are 19 homes within ½ mile of this site. The Salvation Army Camp hosts 250 kids nearby. He noted that most campgrounds do not allow pallets to be burned due to the chemicals.

Mr. Lon Atterberry – No Testimony

Ms. Laura Casey presented that she was concerned over particulate matter in the air as a result of burning and the emissions put off in that process. The fire department is all volunteer and response if there is a fire would be a concern. Property values could be affected.

Mr. Michael Miller presented that his son has asthma and is affected by poor air quality, they moved to the county for that reason. He is concerned over traffic, noise eye sore, and the fact that there is no oversight until something is dangerous and then the damage is already done.

Mr. Kenneth Ewe – No Testimony

Mr. Mike Ingram – No Testimony

Mr. Todd Taylor presented that the comprehensive plan encourages new development in to contiguous with municipalities where water and sewer are available and also details that commercial and industrial development should be along major routes such as interstates and highways. It also discusses that leapfrog development should be avoided.

Mr. Richard Wallick – No Testimony

Mr. Nathan Wallick – No Testimony

#### REBUTTAL

Mr. Wever explained that wood pallets used in international transit must be brought to 145 degrees for 40-50 minutes. He noted that they do not buy contaminated pallets. The proposed device is smaller than most homes in the area. The

catch in the container will prevent the liquid from leaching into the ground. This is a test site to see if the device would work and can be built.

#### CLOSING STATEMENTS

Mr. Robert King stated that the applicant presented to facts, he is lying about his intent. He asked if the board would want this in their neighborhood.

No other interested party had a closing statement.

Mr. Wever had no closing statement.

**Evidentiary portion of the hearing closed.**

#### **Findings by the Zoning Board of Appeals for Petition 2023-06-S:**

- A. Will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare;** There are concerns over the health and safety of the surrounding area, this is a prototype/experimental device and there is concern over the unknown safety issues that may occur.
- B. Will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purpose already permitted. The applicant need not demonstrate complete compatibility, but the applicant shall demonstrate reasonable efforts to minimize incompatibility;** Based on the testimony and concerns of the neighboring property owners this activity would injure the use and enjoyment of their property for the use already permitted. This is a result of additional noise, traffic, sites and possible smells. Additionally, there is a Salvation Army children's camp in the immediate area, this is not compatible with this activity.
- C. Will not be injurious to the district in which it shall be located;** Concerns about noise, traffic, the Salvation Army camp nearby, this is not compatible with the area.
- D. Will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the districts;** Composting is recycling; however, this is a prototype and we do not know what this will do to the surrounding property. There are wells in the area that could be affected. While composting is an agriculture practice without restrictions on the number of containers this is not an orderly development of the area.
- E. That adequate utilities, access roads, drainage and/or other necessary facilities have been or are being provided;** Insufficient drawings showing how the project would be laid out and operate in addition to the location and design of the drainage plan.
- F. That adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion in the public roads;** While ingress/egress is addressed, this will increase the amount and size of the traffic on the roadway.
- G. Is consistent with the Woodford County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.** This is an industrial activity; the plan states these activities should be near municipalities so there is water and septic available. Also, these developments should be along major roadways. This development is not consistent with the plan.

Motion to approve petition #2023-06-S for a Special Use to allow a business consisting of In Vessel composting, Bio-Char production, stockpiling, green house, and shipping container storage and sales in the Agriculture District on 5.637 acres commonly described as 811 Columbia Rd. Washburn, Illinois made by Krug, seconded by Clinch. Roll call vote: Karen Krug – *No*, Teresa Gauger – *No*, Marty Clinch – *No*, John Obery – *No*. *Motion Failed.*

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- Other Business to Come Before the Board:
  - Update on previous months petition/s: all petitions approved.
  - Update on next month petition/s: 2 – Map Amendment, 1- Text Amendment, 1 Special Use.
- Public Input – None
- Adjournment

Mr. Clinch made the motion to adjourn at 8:44 p.m., 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Obery. *Motion Carried.*

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Lisa Jording, Secretary

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Teresa Gauger, Acting Chairman

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Date