

Trustees,

Various residents of Augusta Woods, Highland Lakes South and Highland Lakes subdivisions have been contacting our office to express concern about proposed changes to the Ohio Health property at the corner of Polaris Parkway and Africa Road. The proposed changes include a two-story, 24-hour Emergency Center with a separate helipad, which may adversely impact Genoa Township residents and property values. Residents are concerned that because they are not City residents that their voices may not be appropriately heard and are asking if you would help in formally opposing portions or all of the proposed changes.

Residents have expressed the following reasons why the change in use would be detrimental to them and other residents in the surrounding subdivisions:

- 1) An increase in traffic along Polaris Parkway and Africa Rd. This traffic is potentially dangerous as it will consist of emergency vehicles and private citizens arriving at the facility at a fast speed. The only way for patients and emergency vehicles to enter the facility when traveling from the west, south or north is off of Africa Rd. A bike and walking path that is utilized by area children and their families crosses that entrance. The safety risk would be greatest not only from emergency vehicles, but from distraught drivers in need of emergency care and not focused on driving. There are several school bus stops located on Africa Rd., just to the north of the facility, along with heavy school bus traffic that enters and exits Africa Rd. to make stops in the various sub-divisions. The only other entrance is off of Polaris Parkway, but is only available to those entering from the east, with no stop light. Ohio Health claims that there will be a negligible increase in traffic on Africa, especially south bound, but in a recent trade article, they stated that the majority of their business will come from the area north of Polaris!
- 2) Several Doctors and Nurses have expressed great concern about the safety of the homes and inhabitants in the area. There is an increase in crimes in and around Emergency Medical facilities. This would require an increase in police presence in and around those neighborhoods that Genoa Township would largely be responsible for.
- 3) Increased noise from sirens and helicopter landings and take offs. It can and does occur at all hours at a 24 hour facility. Ohio Health cannot mandate when a siren must be turned on and off as the emergency vehicles enter and leave the facility. The majority will enter and leave by the Africa entrance. The closest to the homes.
- 4) To accommodate a helipad, the area must be cleared of trees that would otherwise dampen the noise and various lights must be on during dark. This includes spot lights that are turned on during landings and take offs, lights on top of tall structures, and a flashing green, white or yellow light that will be placed on top of the facility. The homes on the hills to the north will look right at this light. All overhead lines that are within 4,000 feet must have the large orange balls attached at intervals and the electrical towers to the north must be marked. There were 9 recorded HEMS crashes in 2009 that resulted in 35 fatalities. The FAA considers this so much of a concern that they have launched a campaign for better safety, but do not have any procedures in place yet.
- 5) Ohio Health owns the land directly to the east of the developed area. The plan that was submitted by Ohio Health originally showed this site as luxury condos. Unless Ohio Health is expecting to get into the Luxury condo business, this will probably become a full service hospital to support the 24 hour Emergency facility. When the residents asked at the last meeting why it was zoned for condos, the Ohio Health people replied that they had to put something there to get the first proposal passed!
- 6) Putting in a 24 hour ER and a Helipad will greatly depress the value of the homes in this area in an already depressed market. If Ohio Health eventually expands to a full service hospital on this

site, it will have even further reaching detrimental effects on the home values and the quality of life of those residents in the vicinity. This is of no concern to the city of Westerville, because other than a small group of condos to the east, there is no adverse effects on any Westerville residents.

Would you be interested in scheduling a Trustee meeting before City Council takes action on this right after the first of the year to listen to resident concerns? I had originally asked to add this to your agenda for Thursday, but have since heard from more residents and fear this may be too large of a topic to cover under public comment. I would also be interested in inviting someone from the City and/or Ohio Health to the meeting to have them hear and potential address how they plan to address concerns. What do you all think?

Joe Clase, AICP

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