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Top Stories

Dealership wants to move sales office, build luxury condos

By Douglas P. Scott

12/24/2003

Main Line Land Rover, at 325-327 E. Lancaster Ave. in Wayne, has been trying to get permission to change the look of its grounds for almost a year now.

At last Thursday's Zoning Hearing Board meeting the owner of the property, Rovmain Inc., was before the board again, this time with a new twist. Plans indicate Rovmain wants to move the dealership, which now sits back near the train tracks, up closer to Lancaster Avenue. Then, within the old footprint of the dealership, Rovmain in association with The Knabb Partnership want to build 54 luxury residential multi-family dwellings on the three-acre site.

These homes will be 35 feet high, the same height as the current building and impervious cover on the property will decrease by nearly 30 percent according to Rovmain's plans.

The property where the condos are to be built is zoned C-3, for industrial use, and would require the granting of a use variance to build residential in a commercial zone.

The way the property is arranged now as a "sea of cars," as it was called at the hearing, sits in row after row leading up to the set-back dealership, causing board Chairman John J. Lasak to agree, "There's room for improvement" for the overall appearance of the property.

According to Michael Smyth, owner of the dealership, it was Radnor's Planning Commission that urged them to move the dealership closer to the road.

"You look at the sea of vehicles that has always been irritating I think to the neighbors and to the community and quite frankly a bit of an eyesore," Smyth said to the board. "I think we are definitely trying to enhance the look of the community. Obviously it's beneficial to myself as a car dealer, but I think it's beneficial to the community as well."

Smyth said he's been in contact with many neighbors about the plans and those neighbors in attendance nodded their heads in agreement.

"We're trying to do the right thing... we're trying to be responsive. How do we move this project forward?" he asked the board.

"You're a good salesman," remarked board member Korah Mani, receiving a good chuckle from those in attendance.

The Land Rover dealer does not plan on having a body shop on site as it does now and will move its service area underground to limit the outward appearance of their new building.

Despite Smyth's best sales pitch, he and his team will have to wait to move forward until the Zoning Hearing Board's Jan. 15 meeting where they will give a full presentation on their plans.

The next time they meet the board told Rovmain to have a traffic study engineer in attendance and to look into how the plan would handle an emergency, fearing one exit may not be enough for the condos. Currently the only entrance and exit for the condos and the dealership is Pembroke Avenue, a private road.

Neighbors' concerns included a decrease in privacy and an increase in traffic. However, most indicated they were happy with the plans they had seen to date, including the use of less powerful lights than are currently in use.

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