

# Klar clarifies position on Schuetz purchase

By Chris Klar

Village President

I usually don't write letters to the editor because I feel as a Village Board member, I have ample opportunities to express my position on issues. I thought I had done a good job of that regarding the village's purchase of the Schuetz property, but I obviously have not when I read the emails I have been receiving from residents lately.

So, I am using this opportunity to clarify the issues as I see them regarding the Schuetz property.

At the August 14th, 2006 Village Board meeting, the decision was made by the Board to exercise the option to purchase contract with the Schuetz's with one condition.

That condition is that one half of the village's share, or \$164,000, of the \$935,000 purchase price come from a source or sources outside of the Village's budget. This was the compromise the Board agreed on, and on August 14, we also agreed that this issue would be on the Village Board agenda again in February 2007.

One of the common themes in the emails I have received is the need for the village to purchase this property to prevent it from development, and that a developer would be willing to pay far more than the \$935,000 the village is offering. Here are the facts related to these issues. Over the last several years, the village has refused to consider two separate development plans for this land. One was from the owners of the property for large estate type home lots, and another was from a local church. Since that time, this land has been identified in our comprehensive plan as parkland if the village ever annexes it. Let's not forget this land is in the Town of Dunn.

The village has never pursued development on this land, and with our comprehensive plan in place, there is no reason why it ever would. Sure, you could make the argument that a future Board could change it's mind, go through the entire public process of amending the comprehensive plan, annex the property, and approve a development plan.

But, history has shown that this is not as simple as it sounds, and I for one think it would be foolish for any future Board to think they could get this done. Lands south of the Yahara River, and the River's Edge lands are two historical examples of why this would be virtually impossible.

The \$935,000 total purchase price equates to \$55,000 per acre for the net 17 acres of land. The appraisal used to arrive at the \$935,000 was based on the highest, and questionably, best use of the land, which would be residential development.

I have been mystified why anyone thinks a developer would pay more, windfall amounts more according to some, for this land which has already been appraised at its developmental value. \$55,000 an acre may be slightly less than what some developable land has sold for in our area, but is substantially more than the \$10,000-\$12,000 an acre comparable agricultural land has been selling for.

Development of the property is really irrelevant because in less the Town of Dunn changes its land use plan; this land is not developable beyond the single residence that is currently there and out-buildings. Certainly, we would all like to get five to six times what our property is currently worth, but I fail to see this as the deal of the century some have portrayed it to be.

I personally would prefer to continue to use the Town of Dunn's land use plan to protect and preserve this land as it has for decades, and earmark fees in lieu of parkland dedication collected in the future for parklands identified in our eastside growth area.

But, I am well aware of the need for compromise in our village, and I will stand by my motion at the August 14 Board meeting that the Village of McFarland should purchase this land if one half of the village's share of the purchase price come from sources outside of the Village's budget.

And, I would like to remind everyone that the village has set up a fund to earmark donations for this purpose. As always, feel free to contact me at [chris.klar@mcfarland.wi.us](mailto:chris.klar@mcfarland.wi.us), or call me at 838-7867.