

PZO 2015-01

Introduced by V. J. St. Pierre, Jr.

To remove development restrictions and allow customary accessory uses at golf courses and country clubs as a Special Permit Use.

Background:

At least eight (8) properties in St. Charles Parish were developed as country clubs and swim clubs in the late 60s/early 70s, likely to fill a gap in recreation. All of these clubs registered with the state as non-profit organizations, and were owned, operated, and financially sustained by members. Club sites varied in size from 243 acres (Willowdale Country Club and Golf Course, Luling) to less than two acres (Sun Villa, Norco). All the clubs were built with a swimming pool, bathhouse/concessions, and tennis courts; some also had a clubhouse building; two had golf courses.

Over time, recreational opportunities in the Parish and region increased, leaving these clubs with declining membership and fewer and fewer member-driven revenue-generating functions in their facilities. Clubs are struggling to sustain themselves. Most clubs have sold portions of their original sites to generate revenue.

Unused square footage is an asset that clubs could use to generate revenue. Some clubs have leased space to commercial businesses, but the R-1A and R-1B zoning districts generally do not permit commercial business. New commercial activities in existing clubs should be reviewed through the Special Permit process for compatibility with the host country club and also with the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed ordinance changes will:

- eliminate development restrictions that few existing clubs comply with
- allow commercial activities on golf courses and country clubs as a Special Permit
- allow the public to comment on proposed commercial activities

Planning and Zoning context:

Zoning and permitted uses: All but one of the Parish's six existing clubs is situated entirely within a single-family residential zoning district—R-1A & R-1B (only Hill Heights is split-zoned R-1A (pool and club house site), C-2 (in the undeveloped northern part of the site and ball fields); and an OL spot (recently rezoned to permit a cell tower). Residential zoning districts prohibit commercial activity such as snack shops, restaurants, exercise and fitness businesses, personal services shops (cosmetology shops and spas), and retail sales. Although these activities are generally offered at country clubs and golf courses as accessory uses, they are not permitted in single-family zoning districts.

Site design requirements and non-compliance: Most existing golf courses and country clubs in the Parish were developed a decade or more before the 5 acre minimum site size and setback requirements for parking became law when the 1981 zoning ordinance was adopted. Few existing clubs meet these requirements. In order to permit expansion of facilities or new activities, this non-compliance has to be resolved with acquisition of land, redesigned parking, or more likely, a variance (\$100 application fee/30-45 day process).

Permit process: Customary accessory uses, whether by the clubs or by private businesses under some form of agreement with the club, have been permitted, allowed, or discouraged inconsistently at all of the clubs and with little to no opportunity for community input.

Potential outcomes:

Existing clubs, almost all of which currently are legally non-conforming with regard to minimum site size or parking location, will no longer be non-confirming with regard to these restrictions if they are struck.

Existing clubs will be able to apply for a Special Permit for accessory uses even if those uses are:

- Generally not permitted in the R-1A, R-1A(M), or R-1B zoning districts
- Operated for the profit or a private individual or business
- Offered to club membership or separate membership or to the general public

New country clubs and golf courses will be required to obtain a Special Permit, but will not necessarily have to meet a 5 acre minimum site size, nor will they necessarily be required to setback all parking at least 50 feet all rear and side property lines *unless* those restrictions are deemed necessary through the Special Use process. New country clubs will be required to list the types of services they will or may provide and how those services will or may be made available to members and/or to the general public.

Through the Special Permit process, accessory uses that clubs request will be reviewed for compatibility with the existing or new host club and also with the surrounding neighborhood.