

Mr. Gibbs: Last item on the agenda is PZO-2015-01 requested by V. J. St. Pierre, Jr., Parish President for an ordinance to amend the St. Charles Parish Zoning Ordinance of 1981, Section VI. pertaining to golf courses and country clubs and their accessory uses in R-1A, R-1A(M), and R-1B zoning districts. Ms. Stein.

Ms. Stein: Thank you Mr. Chair. This is a first for us. We put together a little background that may or may not be useful. We put together what the proposed ordinance will change, the Planning & Zoning context, and then what we think the potential outcome will be.

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.

We're asking for your support on the changes.

Mr. Gibbs: Ms. Stein did you guys talk to the 8 owners of these establishments? Does anybody know that this is even being considered?

Ms. Stein: Most. I haven't talked to anybody at Sun Villa. I did talk to somebody from Sun Villa but he's not on the board, but he said the facility is so small that they can't permit anything there anyway.

Mr. Frangella: So I guess the question that I would have would be if they have an existing with just what it is with the club, that's still good, you don't have to go back and file a special permit?

Ms. Stein: No. Existing clubs are grandfathered.

Mr. Frangella: So everything that is there now stays.

Ms. Stein: No. We're trying to assist them in being more flexible at generating revenue in ways that are not going to become a nuisance in the neighborhood. That's why it would be required to come to you. I'm a member at Hill Heights, I'll be looking at a cell tower when my kids get swimming in the next 2 weeks. They have leased a portion of their building to a fitness club that we don't know how to permit a fitness club. So when it comes into our department, we really don't know what to do with it. Willowdale Country Club would like to sell their pool, it doesn't exactly address that. If they sell the pool it's still zoned R-1A, unless they sell to another something that we can consider a country club, but we would like to give them options to do other things with their clubs that will generate revenue, much needed revenue.

Mr. Booth: this cleans up a problem that you have. I think it's the right thing to do, we should go with it.

Mr. Albert: I feel like this is a win-win for the businesses and the parish. It solves the problem we've had in the department internally, trying to find the proper permitting channel to offer these correct accessory uses within these structures. We'll get rid of some antiquated language that's in the zoning ordinance now. I really do think that assists the business community and really gives an opportunity to revitalize some of these.

Mr. Gibbs: I just want to make sure that we're not restricting them. I know the Cypress site was purchased by a group and some of the residents, it's not restricting their opportunities to expand at this point when they wouldn't have to come to Planning & Zoning and now they are going to have to go to Planning & Zoning if they have to do. What I'm struggling with is I spoke to a couple of people today and they don't fully understand what this is doing and it appears that it's restricting them and it's putting more regulations on them.

Mr. Albert: In short, if they wanted to do something creative with their extra space, if they wanted to put in a small tavern to serve people after they've finished a game of golf, they can't do it right now, we can't permit it. With this there is a way for them to come present it to the Commission one time to make sure that the surrounding neighborhood is okay with it and they have a way to proceed with that use. It gives them accessory use options where right now they cannot have them, without coming in and reviewing them and getting a special use permit.

Ms. Stein: None of the clubs have a special use permit right now for us to amend in the first place, but the issue is if the square footage that the club can't manage, can't maintain, if there is something else that can go into that space that is right for the club, that's not a nuisance to the neighborhood, that's why it would be required to get a special permit, that's why they come.

Mr. Gibbs: I met some concerns today. Any other comments or questions? This is a public hearing for PZO-2015-01 is there anyone in the audience that care to speak in favor or against? Seeing none. Cast your vote please.

YEAS: Pierre, Booth, Gibbs, Frangella, Foster

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Loupe, Galliano

Mr. Gibbs: That passes unanimously.

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