



Office of the Common Council

Ald. Rebecca Kemble, District 18

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August 27, 2019

Dear Plan Commission Members:

I'm writing regarding the State of Wisconsin's application for a Conditional Use Permit to expand the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Facility located at 301 Troy Dr. which is #5 on the agenda for your August 26 meeting (Legistar #56798).

On Monday, August 19, 2019 I convened a public meeting at the Mendota Mental Health Institute Conference Center about the project and to provide a forum for neighbors to voice their concerns. Please see my report on the meeting from my [recently published blog](#).

Residents raised concerns about the following issues:

- increased traffic and speeding on Green Ave. and Troy Dr., particularly at the School Rd intersection where Mendota Elementary School children cross
- neighborhood safety procedures in the event of a patient escape
- the enlarged building and parking lot footprints on land that is sacred and culturally sensitive to the Ho Chunk Nation
- continued public access to the campus
- potential future re-use or discontinued use of the facility
- the late stage of the planning and design process at which information about the project was being shared with the public, and the State's failure to seek public input on the project at any time

With regards to the first point, I was confused by these comments in the staff report:

“While the proposed addition will increase the number of car trips by facility staff as well as visitors, Staff note that Traffic Engineering Division believes that the trips will be dispersed not only throughout the day – with the AM and PM staff shifts and visitors coming and going – but also northwards on Green Avenue and east on Troy Drive, and therefore not result in significant negative impacts to the neighborhood.”

Speeding and high traffic volume on Troy Dr. and Green Ave. have been at the top of the list of public safety concerns in District 18 since I took office in 2015. I have worked for years with Traffic Engineering to address these concerns, and we are finally on track to make some headway on Green Ave. However, the speeding on Troy Dr. between Northport and Lerdahl continues to be a serious hazard, especially for Mendota Elementary School students.

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It is highly significant that shift change times coincide with the times at which children need to cross the road to get to school, and times at which residents who live on Troy Dr. are attempting to enter and exit their driveways. It is safe to say that the proposed increase in the number of car trips by facility staff and visitors to and from MJTC would indeed negatively impact an already existing dangerous situation.

With regards to the enlarged footprint for the buildings and parking lot on historical Ho Chunk Nation territory, District 18 resident Dr. Sarah Clayton has submitted comments to you through Chris Wells that includes this information:

“On Friday (today), I spoke with Bill Quackenbush, who serves as Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation, and learned that his office has not been consulted about this project. This is astonishingly irresponsible on the part of the state, given that Wisconsin Tribes are key stakeholders in these developments and should have been full participants in this dialogue from the beginning.

“I also spoke with the State Archaeologist, John Broihahn today, and learned that the State Historic Preservation Office has not yet reviewed or approved the archaeological report provided by a private firm in connection to this development.”

I agree with Dr. Clayton’s assessment that “it would be egregious to move forward without approval from” the State Historic Preservation Office.

There may be enough currently underutilized parking facilities on the campus to absorb the additional demand, without paving over more green and potentially culturally significant space. I encourage the Plan Commission to seek a Traffic Demand Management Plan from the applicant. The plan should address the parking issue, and explore the feasibility of providing bus passes to staff since Route 22 stops at the campus.

I understand that the State of Wisconsin has a special relationship with the City, exempting them from all approval process outside of zoning and land use issues. While the traffic safety issues can be mitigated through efforts of the City and Traffic Engineering, the issues involving disturbing ground on traditional Ho Chunk Territory should be addressed by the State.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rebecca Kemble
District 18 Alder
Madison Common Council

Alder Kemble's Blog

Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center Expansion Public Meeting

August 24, 2019 4:08 PM

This past Monday, August 19, 2019, approximately 50 people attended a public meeting on the campus of the Mendota Mental Health Institute (MMHI) to learn about the State of Wisconsin's plans for expanding the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) to accommodate 50 more children. I convened the meeting as part of the City's Conditional Use Permit process.

Thanks to MMHI Director Dr. Greg Van Rybroek, City of Madison Planner Chris Wells, State Department of Administration Project Manager Bob Hoffmann and BWBR Architect/Designer Laura Davis for their presentations.

Dr. Van Rybroek welcomed us to the MMHI Conference Center and explained their [philosophy and practice of treatment](#) that has been hailed as the gold standard in caring for children who he characterized as "people who were born in hell." He noted that five patients helped in the design process for the new building.

Chris Wells explained the City's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process that governs land uses, value and enjoyment, health and welfare, and aesthetics. The standards by which the Plan Commission makes decisions are outlined in Madison General Ordinance [28.183\(6\)](#).

Project Manager Bob Hoffmann explained that the passage of [2017 Act 185](#) mandates the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake schools by Jan 21, 2021 (amended to July 1 2021), and the expansion of MJTC to accommodate no fewer than 29 additional beds. The proposed project adds a total of 50 - 30 for boys and 20 for girls. This year's state budget allocated \$43,944,000 to the project. Governor Evers has allowed for additional funding if approved by the State Building Commission and the legislature. The Building Commission's next meeting will be held on October 16, 2019 in the Governor's Office. Hoffmann said they plan to break ground in February, 2020.

Architect Laura Davis showed site maps and building plans describing the two new wings that will be built off the existing facility, as well as the parking lot expansion to the south of the building (see plans and maps in their application materials linked below). She explained that the building could not go higher than two stories because it is located in a historic district with height restrictions.

Residents raised concerns about the following issues:

- increased traffic and speeding on Green Ave. and Troy Dr., particularly at the School Rd intersection
- neighborhood safety procedures in the event of a patient escape
- the enlarged building and parking lot footprints on land that is sacred and culturally sensitive to the Ho Chunk Nation
- continued public access to the campus
- potential future re-use or discontinued use of the facility
- the late stage of the planning and design process at which information about the project was being shared with the public, and the State's failure to seek public input on the project at any time

The Plan Commission will hold a public hearing on the State's CUP application this Monday, August 26, 2019 at 5:45pm in room 201 of the City County Building. You can see all application materials and staff comments in documents attached to [this link](#). Please direct all comments to cwells@cityofmadison.com.

Wells, Chris

From: Ritt, Michele <Ritt.Michele@countyofdane.com>
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2019 4:15 PM
To: Wells, Chris
Subject: MMH

Hello.

Just following up regarding our conversation at MMH after the recent meeting. Via Alder Kemble, I understand that the Burial Mounds are a state issue.

I do hope that we can still work to minimize the footprint of the buildings and parking lots. While I doubt that the architect will be called upon to redesign the buildings, I do hope we can look at the parking spots again. My hope is that we utilize all available parking, instead of creating additional paved surfaces. This would decrease disturbance to the land as well as be a more environmental option.

I also hope we can make a plan for increased traffic, as well as construction noise. It seems we also need to consider an additional crossing guard for Mendota School.

Please keep me posted on future developments and decisions. I do support this project and look forward to the youth being part of my neighborhood.

Thank you. :)

Michele Ritt
Dane County Supervisor
District 18
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(608) 335-6827

Environment, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee, Chair
City County Homeless Issues Committee
Dane County Food Council
Dane County Food Council Food Waste Task Force
Dane County Food Council Budget Sub Committee
Dane County Tree Board
Land Conservation Committee

Wells, Chris

From: Sarah C Clayton <sclayton@wisc.edu>
Sent: Friday, August 23, 2019 3:59 PM
To: Wells, Chris
Cc: Kemble, Rebecca
Subject: Expansion of MMHI Juvenile Center

Dear Mr. Wells,

Thank you for attending the neighborhood meeting earlier this week regarding the proposed expansion of the Juvenile Treatment Center on the MMHI grounds from 24,000 to >80,000 square feet.

I am writing to provide comments for consideration by the City Plan Commission in advance of their vote this Monday, August 26 to deny or approve the conditional use permit for this expansion. I write to you as a concerned resident of the North Lake Mendota neighborhood, an archaeologist, and faculty member at the UW-Madison.

I strongly urge the City Plan Commission to deny this permit request, on the basis that this proposal does NOT meet Conditional Use Approval Standards ([M.G.O. 28.183\(6\)](#)). In particular, it fails to meet standards 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9. The vote on this proposal is premature, considering that there is no environmental impact assessment, and there is no Traffic Demand Management Plan. Moreover, this expansion will adversely affect the environment (both natural and cultural), aesthetics, and livability of the surrounding area for the long term. This development violates Standard 9, in that it will NOT create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area.

The MMHI is situated on a landscape of great natural beauty and considerable historical significance for the state of Wisconsin. This is the location of one of the most important cultural heritage sites in the state. In particular, there are two large groups of effigy mounds on the grounds, which were built more than 1000 years ago and represent a sacred, ancestral burial ground for Wisconsin's first nations. Both of these mound groups are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

More than 20,000 of these effigy mounds once dotted the Wisconsin landscape, but 80% of them have been destroyed by development decisions similar to the one we are facing now. The largest surviving mound in the state, a bird with a wingspan of over 600 feet, is located on this land.

To expand this facility to 80,000 feet would do irrevocable damage to this cultural resource, and is moving in the wrong direction with respect to the long-term use of this land and the preservation of its unique aesthetic value. This development will permanently alter the character of this landscape and diminish its accessibility to the public. We owe it to the first nations of Wisconsin and to future generations to preserve these sites, rather than to permanently divorce them from the landscapes in which they are situated. Surely we are capable of better stewardship than this.

This ancestral burial ground and unique cultural landscape is NOT a suitable location for the proposed Juvenile Treatment facility.

On Friday (today), I spoke with Bill Quackenbush, who serves as Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Ho-Chunk Nation, and learned that his office has not been consulted about this project. This is astonishingly irresponsible on the part of the state, given that Wisconsin Tribes are key stakeholders in these developments and should have been full participants in this dialogue from the beginning.

I also spoke with the State Archaeologist, John Broihahn today, and learned that **the State Historic Preservation Office has not yet reviewed or approved the archaeological report** provided by a private firm in connection to this development. It would be egregious to move forward without approval from this entity.

I urge the City Plan Commission to deny this permit. This facility should be built in an alternative location that will not disrupt public access to sites on the National Register of Historic Places or diminish the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

Sincerely,
Sarah Clayton

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Sarah Clayton, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Archaeology Section Chair, Department of Anthropology
Affiliated Faculty, American Indian Studies Program
University of Wisconsin-Madison
sclayton@wisc.edu

Wells, Chris

From: Carmen Reeder <carmenkreeder@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 10:26 PM
To: Wells, Chris
Cc: reeds2525@gmail.com
Subject: MMHI Expansion Project

Hello Mr. Wells,

I wanted to drop you a quick email since I had to leave before the conclusion of Monday's meeting at MMHI. First of all, thank you for your time on Monday night. Your input was valuable.

I would like to express a few concerns about the area around MMHI, or that known as the City of Madison proper. For the most part, MMHI has been an excellent neighbor to those of us in the North Lake Mendota Neighborhood. It is the City of Madison that has unfortunately continued to drop the ball. The lack of concern for excessive speeding on Green Avenue/Troy Drive, as well as the nonchalant attitude about protecting elementary children crossing Troy Drive to go to school is absurd and totally unacceptable. I have seen many animals killed on Green Avenue when entering the curve going past Mendota. Animals that could have survived IF people were indeed going the speed limit. My husband and family have lived here since 2003 and have seen a steady increase in traffic and speed. The 25 or 35 mph in the area, especially Green Avenue is very rarely followed, if ever by those who DO NOT live in the adjoining neighborhoods.

Will it take the death of one of my neighbors walking their dog or a small child trying to cross the street to go to school to be killed or seriously injured before the City realizes speed bumps MUST be installed!? I should hope not.

NOW is the time to get this done, before even more traffic is pushed into the area and the MMHI campus on the ONLY one possible RESIDENTIAL street going into and out of the area.

I beg of you to please help the concerned voices of our otherwise quiet neighborhoods be heard. Please help those two brave children who spoke at Monday's meeting! We Northsiders matter like any other area of the city. Please prove we do.

Best Regards,

Carmen Reeder

Sent from my iPhone

Wells, Chris

From: Kim Giese <kimgiese@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2019 11:22 AM
To: Kemble, Rebecca
Cc: Wells, Chris; rep.sargent@legis.wisconsin.gov
Subject: Re: Follow up from Monday's meeting

That meeting was such a disappointment, clearly a "too little, too late" situation as the state architect made it clear they will go ahead with this project as is without real need for CUP approval! Why wasn't the public brought on board with this development long ago? Why do we pay but have no say? This is not an example of representative government. I am deeply disappointed in how poorly this has been handled by our city and county representatives. The only aspects that may be salvaged are addressing concerns of the public. Traffic is a real problem now. Many commented on the speed at which MMHI employees drive thru our neighborhood. We have legitimate safety concerns should one of the treatment patients escape the facility. How will we be informed when this happens? It needs to be immediately communicated via text and/or email. Perhaps the alderwoman and county board member can get out front on these issues. Thanks for your time.

Kim Giese