

Town of Sumner grants variance to develop shoreline

By *Tristan McGough*
Special to the Reporter

Sumner supervisors were delighted to approve a variance request at their Dec. 11, 2017, meeting that seemed to be the perfect outcome to the dire situation of what to do with the bought-out properties within the floodplain of the Rock River and Lake Koshkonong.

During the regular Sumner Town Board Meeting on Nov. 11, 2017, officials were grappling with what to do with the over 120 floodplain buy-out properties that are now owned by Jefferson County and managed by its Park Department. Across a number of public information media outlets, the county had been looking for input from residents as to what

should be done with the recently acquired floodplain properties. Note that there are other properties on the buy-out waiting list.

Sumner supervisors had last month gone over the various options that were then being floated. Jefferson County Supervisor Gary Kutz was then in attendance, as he was for this night's town hall, and he had then went over some of the proposed alternatives.

Any of the options that included the town either purchasing or leasing the floodplain designated terrain, or having to maintain it as a park within its jurisdiction, had been outrightly rejected by Sumner officials.

However, one of the more attractive options that had been

deliberated on the public floor was the consolidation of smaller shoreline and adjacent lots to create larger, conforming lots that could offer a regulatory-compliant residence plus scenic waterfront.

It was just such an option that came to light at the board meeting on Dec. 11 under a Variance Application by James Bussey, who is looking to sell his six small lots in the Glen Oaks subdivision. However, the interest Frank Scholz has demonstrated in these parcels is contingent on the six lots being reconfigured into three lots.

As a variance application must show hardship if the variance remained ungranted, Scholz's agent, a broker and owner at Best Realty of Edgerton, Ltd., Paula Carrier, argued,

"Mr. Bussey is paying taxes on \$297,800 in value on a property that may only be worth \$200,000 if 3 lots cannot be created. This is a hardship that he should not have to endure based on today's zoning, not yesterday's requirements."

The Plan Commission had already heard, discussed, evaluated and approved applicant Carrier's Petition for Variance, which would render the six lots into three. Lot 1 would end-up being 13,200 sq.ft., Lot 2 at 17,200 sq.ft. and Lot 3 with 15,400 sq.ft., all being over the 10,000 minimum lot square footage ordinance requirement and all remaining R-1 Residential district zone. Carrier stated in the petition, "It would conform to what currently exists there now."

Quentin Carpenter from the PC was on-hand to broach the variance request with the board, explaining that Bussey's chance to sell this set of lots, which he's owned since the 1980s, is contingent on the six-into-three land consolidation proposal. The commissioner went over in detail what the proposal entailed, its graphic depiction in the certified survey map, and resultant dimensions.

Carpenter and the other commissioners agreed with Carrier's assertion, "The highest and best use of this land is to have three lots." And they were keen to add to the town's tax base, which Carrier avowed, "The tax base that this could create for future township assessments could exceed 1.5 million."

The board's supervisors asked only a few clarificatory questions, as there wasn't an inkling of adverse reaction from any neighbor or nearby resident, and, further, Carpenter and Carrier did a fine job of explaining the details of what had been already seen as an optimal outcome for shoreline properties, whether river or lake.

As if to clinch the issue, Carrier averred, "If this variance were to be granted, it would not negatively impact or affect the public and the three lots would be larger than many of the other lots that currently exist in Glen Oaks."

The board members saw their preferred option coming to life and voted to sustain it, granting the variance and combining the six properties into three.