

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
GENERAL MINUTES  
January 10, 2024

APPROVED

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Harry Raimondi at 7pm.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Chairman Harry Raimondi, James Dolbeare, Elizabeth Veatch, Pat Riley,  
Mike LaRosa, Glenn Szurgot, Patty Errera and Rob Morreale

Member(s) Absent: Sunil Shah

A quorum was present.

Also Present: Chidochashe Baker  
Community Planner

**CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

Mr. Dolbeare made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morreale, to approve the following minutes:

<u>Mtg Date</u>	<u>Case Number and Name</u>
12/27	General Minutes Z2308-04 / Almost Home Foundation Z2311-03 / Centennial Center Outlot

All ayes.

**MOTION CARRIED**

**PUBLIC HEARING(S)**

1) Z2312-01 / VETERINARY EMERGENCY GROUP / 1287 E. Higgins Road - Park St. Claire Plaza / Special Use for Animal Hospital

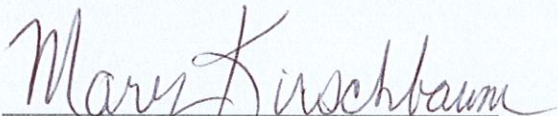
**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Szurgot made a motion, seconded by Mr. LaRosa, to close the meeting.

All ayes.

**MOTION CARRIED**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.

  
Mary Kirschbaum, Secretary  
Zoning Board of Appeals



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Member(s) Absent: Sunil Shah

A quorum was present.

Also Present:

Sworn in for testimony:	Chidochashe Baker Community Planner	Matthew Allee Akerman, LLP 71 S. Wacker Drive 47 <sup>th</sup> Floor Chicago, IL	Jennifer Hanlon 44 S. Broadway White Plains, NY
	Lynne Park 504 Columbine Circle Schaumburg		

Chairman Raimondi asked if the public notice requirements were met and the Recording Secretary replied, yes.

Mr. Matthew Allee, Petitioner, introduced himself, the location of the proposed business and noted that they only require interior alterations. He added that to his knowledge, neither the applicant, nor the Village has received any negative comments from the public on this project. They feel the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area and they comply with all of the special use requirements.

Ms. Jennifer Hanlon, Senior Director of Real Estate, stated that Veterinary Emergency Group is also known as "VEG." They are a 24-hour emergency and urgent care hospital for pets and are based in White Plains, New York, just outside of Manhattan. They operate 64 locations throughout the U.S., 4 of which are in the greater Chicago area. They provide emergency and urgent-care-only services and do not do any type of general practice—e.g., spays, neuters, vaccines, etc. They do not have any outside component to their operations, as everything is contained within their four walls. They are an open-concept hospital, meaning the pet owner gets to stay with their pet for treatment every step of the way. The pet owner can watch their pet being operated on, get stitches, etc. It's a very customer-focus-type of emergency care, and they are excited to bring their services to Schaumburg.

Ms. Chido Baker stated that the proposed tenant space is currently vacant. VEG provides emergency services for domestic animals and does not provide services to farm animals. They expect to employ 16 to 20 employees, with 5 to 8 onsite at any given time. They will be open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and their peak hours are expected to be 6pm – 10pm. The entrance will include a set of two double doors

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and upon entering, customers will proceed to the reception desk. There will be triage areas, cages and seating for customers. The floor plan includes five exam rooms, one surgical room, a break room for staff members, a meeting room, laundry and storage rooms. There are 444 parking spaces provided and the entire shopping center has 681 parking spaces, resulting in a 196-parking surplus. The proposed use is located in a retail service shopping center, similar to other animal hospitals within the Village. This property has a future land use designation "Community Commercial" in the Comprehensive Plan and the proposed animal hospital fits within this use category. Ms. Baker said that Staff is supportive of the request and is recommending approval.

Chairman Raimondi asked if the public had any questions or concerns.

Ms. Lynne Park stated that she lives near the proposed and asked if the Village is OK with patrons sleeping at the facility overnight with their pets. She also asked if the Village is going to limit how many people would be allowed to sleep there overnight. Ms. Hanlon said that individuals have the option to stay with their pet during their treatment, and VEG is by no means facilitating people to come and use them as a hotel or anything of that nature. They are not exceptionally busy during the late, night-time hours. Patrons can stay with their pet if they are hospitalized. Most patrons go to VEG between 6pm – 10pm. Between midnight and 5am, they may get one-to-two customers per hour, if that. She added that most people choose to go home and return when it's convenient for them to check on their pet. During the day, they may have one-to-three cases per hour and during peak hours, they may have two-to-three cases. Ms. Park asked where dogs will be walked because there is no grass except across the alley behind the building. Ms. Hanlon said they operate very similar to Petco and Banfield where if a pet has to go outside, they can take them to the front where they can eliminate on landscaped islands, which their landlord has given them permission to do. They can also take the pets out the back door to find grass. Most animals are very sick when they come to VEG and typically do not need to eliminate. They typically have a handful of animals over the course of a 24-hour period that need to go outside. For this specific location, they will probably be walked on an island or may have to eliminate in the facility. Ms. Park said that the parking lot is "crazy" and usually on weekends, cars coming from Meacham Road are stopped as they try to make that turn into the plaza because of people walking into Kohl's. She said that if her pet is sick, she wants to get there quickly, and there is a lot of traffic and people walking and asked if the Village has any concerns. Ms. Hanlon said she cannot speak to exactly how people will be driving as they get to VEG, but they operate 64 animal hospitals around the country which are all in a retail center. They are in the mix with some of the highest end retailers in the U.S. They have locations next to Whole Foods, down the street from the Apple Store and it has never been an issue getting traffic in and out. With the surplus of parking, their customers can park their car and walk into VEG. Based on their current operations, they do not anticipate having an issue with people getting in and out of the parking lot. Ms. Hanlon said that their landlord has granted them some short-term parking spaces (she estimated three to five). Chairman Raimondi stated that VEG will not receive any specific parking spaces for their facility and that the plaza has shared parking.

Chairman Raimondi asked the Board for their comments.

Mr. Dolbear stated that having the dogs eliminate on the landscape islands could be a problem with the cross traffic. It is a great location and will not conflict with the other retailers. He noted that it was recently re-paved and re-graded and there is a lot of water retention in there during heavy rains. The lack of islands



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and grass space is a problem and there is nothing in the rear of the building. There are 18-wheelers that drive through there.

Ms. Veatch stated that the drive aisle is concerning because when large dogs come in and need to be put onto a gurney or a cart, there is no curb cut that is directly in front of the doors. The plans don't show a sliding or push-button door in the vestibule, and she asked how that typically works. Ms. Hanlon said that none of their facilities have automatic doors at the front entrance because of safety for the animals and the employees. When a person comes to VEG, they have to physically open the door, which is typically unlocked during the day and when they get into the vestibule, a staff member has to buzz them in. This helps prevent an animal from getting loose. Most of their facilities do not utilize gurneys but do have them on hand in case they are needed. Typically, if a large animal cannot walk, a staff member will go to the parking lot and assist the pet owner. She is unaware if any of their facilities, which do not have curb cuts in front, have had any issue with utilizing their gurney. Ms. Veatch asked if they typically provide any waste bags and waste receptacles outside. Ms. Hanlon said that with landlord approval, they will install doggie depots, which are posts that have a small sign to ask people to clean up after their pet and they have bags at the bottom. Their employees oversee the upkeep of them. Ms. Veatch asked if the freezer in the storage area is intended for deceased animals, and Ms. Hanlon said, yes and added that a crematory comes to the rear door once per week at a minimum. Ms. Veatch is pleased that VEG has a comfort station. She was concerned when she saw the rendering for Exam Rooms 1 and 2, which are full glass. She said that when pet owners are in the exam room, they are crying and don't want to be in full view of the parking lot. Ms. Hanlon said that the glass will be frosted over so that no one will be able to see directly inside.

Mr. Riley asked who will clean up the dog waste. Ms. Hanlon said there is typically a stipulation in their leases that VEG staff must ensure that the surrounding property is kept clean of animal waste. He asked if she agrees to one of the conditions on the Staff Report which states that boarding and kennel services for animals is not permitted. She replied, "We have no intentions now or ever in our operations to offer boarding."

Mr. Szurgot expressed concerns about animals relieving themselves on the parking lot islands. He does not recall other veterinary establishments in Schaumburg where animals relieve themselves in parking lots or on islands. He believes they typically have an area in the back of the unit or inside the facility. Ms. Hanlon said that their method of animals relieving themselves is no different than PetSmart, Petco or Banfield. He said he doesn't recall a business presenting that idea at a ZBA public hearing before. He feels the proposed 90 decibels is high for this type of facility and asked Ms. Hanlon to explain the sound barriers because they will have neighbors to the east and west. She said that while she is not an architect, she would do her best to explain what measures they take to soundproof their facilities. All of the four walls of their facilities are soundproof with insulation. VEG also installs sound-battling on the walls and the ceilings to absorb 95% of the noise they are getting in their hospitals. Most of the animals in their care do not make much, if any, noise. As an open-concept hospital, if it was very noisy, they wouldn't be able to provide the services that they do. VEG locations are located in retail settings across the country and in some of the largest residential buildings in Manhattan and D.C. without ever having any noise complaints. She noted that VEG is not a typical veterinary setting with healthy, happy pets and concluded, "Quite honestly, it's fairly quiet." Mr. Szurgot asked what type of ceilings they have, and she said that part of the hospital will have dropped ceilings and part of the hospital will have an open-concept ceiling and noted that their ceilings are very

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high. A majority of the hospital, on the perimeter, will have dropped ceilings. He asked how they mitigate the odor and if they have scrubbers. She said that they have a specific HVAC system that essentially pulls in new air and replaces it with the old air that it pulls out. Their facilities are cleaned consistently by their employees since they are open 24 hours per day. Sometimes, they will have an outside cleaning company provide a deeper cleaning. He asked if Staff is satisfied with VEG's proposed noise control and cleaning plans, and Ms. Baker said, yes. He asked how Staff feels about the pets relieving themselves outside. Ms. Baker said that if the Board has concerns, the Board can add a condition that may state that it stays within the facility. Ms. Hanlon said that most of their animals are not going for walks, rather, they are going outside for 1 or 2 minutes and coming directly back inside. He noted that there will be people next door eating outside and that everything needs to look nice to the east and the west of the subject tenant space.

Mr. LaRosa stated that there is work being done at the subject property with permits on the window and asked if VEG is doing the work. Ms. Baker said the property owner is currently doing renovations. He asked about signage, and she said that a signage plan has not yet been submitted. She added that there was a rendering in one of the plans that showed that the signage would be mostly proposed on the frosted glass on the front of the building. However, that has not yet been evaluated because it was not proposed with this submittal. He said it seems like a fantastic facility and that there is a need for it. He said Park St. Claire Plaza is busy and feels that putting an animal hospital in the middle of a retail area is unusual. Ms. Hanlon stated that animal urgent care facilities going into retail is a new trend. It is referred to as "medtail," and that's why many cities like Schaumburg have not yet seen this new concept. Years ago, urgent care for humans were not next to retail, but they have been popping up everywhere. VEG would like to change the way people think when it comes to emergency and urgent care animal medicine. They feel the proposed location will become familiar to those who do their day-to-day shopping at this plaza as it will blend seamlessly with other retail and service providers.

Ms. Errera asked if it's correct that VEG is strictly emergency-related and different from Golf Rose Animal Hospital which also trims nails, does vaccines, etc. Ms. Hanlon said they are emergency and urgent care. She added that the biggest difference between emergency and urgent care is that "emergency" is life or death and "urgent" care is "I probably shouldn't wait until the morning or afternoon, so let me pop into VEG to see if they can help." Ms. Errera said it makes sense.

Mr. Morreale stated that he loves the look of it, but the proposed location is kind of different. He agreed with Ms. Hanlon that there are more urgent cares going into retail spaces.

Chairman Raimondi asked why VEG chose this particular location and if they have any facilities in industrial locations or in smaller strip malls near a residential area. Ms. Hanlon said that they only locate in high-end, affluent demographic communities strictly in retail locations and have no industrial or office-type locations. Their business strategy is to locate into retail areas, as other medical-related practices are doing. They are a destination-service provider. People don't go to Kohl's and decide to run into VEG while they are there. However, every time they go to Kohl's, Target and the other retailers at this plaza, they will see VEG. Then, when their pet has a 3am emergency, they know exactly where VEG is located. Chairman Raimondi said he understands that it is for visibility, but this is not a neighborhood location. You do have people living to the south of here who, in recent times, have had to put up with truck noise. He does not want this facility added to the problems they already have. He feels there could be some impact

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on the adjacent stores and understands that VEG doesn't get many animals in a day. Even if this is happening in other parts of the country, he cares about what's happening in Schaumburg. He said that Schaumburg has some nice industrial properties that have very high visibility, too. He added that even if a dog just urinates out front, it needs to be cleaned up somehow. Ms. Hanlon said at their facilities where animals are using the concrete, VEG does have cleaning equipment for that. For a facility like this, they would likely have a hose out front if there was a hook-up for that. She added that they are very open to having a stipulation that animals can only relieve themselves in the rear of the facility, which is very common at many of their locations. He suggested that they use a spray canister to break it down and does not expect a hose to be in front of the store. She said that with some municipalities, they have a stipulation that someone from their staff must go out a certain number of times per day to check and make sure everything is clean and maintain a log on file.

Chairman Raimondi highly recommends that dogs only relieve themselves in the building on artificial grass or something similar that includes a drain. He is not against the concept but is not sold on the location unless some of the aforementioned items are taken care of. Ms. Hanlon said that the reason they don't have artificial grass, or the like, inside the building is because they are a very high-end, boutique-emergency provider. The average person walking into their facility is spending \$900 - \$1,200. If you have artificial grass inside a 5,000 to 6,000 square-foot facility, things start to smell. They have explored it a number of times but have learned that it does not make for a good customer experience. She said that they are 100% open to the stipulation that employees can only take pets out the back door. She added that most of the animals don't go outside. On average, 80% of their clients are in the facility for less than one hour. They average 80% of urgent care, which means that it is not a life-or-death situation. Even though the artificial grass sounds like a great idea, in practicality and from a customer standpoint, it doesn't make for the greatest experience to have that in there.

Mr. Szurgot asked what their floors are made of. Ms. Hanlon said ceramic tiles are in the treatment areas, but she does not know what material is used in the other areas. However, they are easy to clean up and some rooms have drains. She said that a lot of dogs don't really know how to use a patch of artificial grass inside. Chairman Raimondi said that since they propose to have six-to-eight staff members at one time, they will have enough time to make sure that the facility doesn't smell. He said he is in favor of having the area clean and smelling OK, along with a canister outside to spray and clean that. He asked if they looked at any other locations in Schaumburg and she said they have been looking in Schaumburg for the past two years. The subject location is the first opportunity they had which is the correct area of town and correct square footage.

Ms. Veatch said she agrees with spraying down the concrete and keeping it clean. She disagrees with requiring artificial grass inside the building. She has been in numerous facilities that have artificial grass, and it does "stink." It is like a germ factory area, and a lot of older dogs don't understand how to use it. She doesn't see that being beneficial. She said there must be a waste receptacle out front.

Ms. Errera asked if they can use the rear of the building if dogs need to relieve themselves. Chairman Raimondi said there is not much room and there is no grass. Mr. LaRosa said there are many semi-trucks back there and people frequently use it as a cut-through.

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Mr. Dolbeare said that he agrees with Ms. Veatch. He works in many hospitals and flooring that is not tile, is usually an epoxy-type of base. Therefore, materials can be cleaned up relatively easy. He noted that there is a human emergency care by Binny's, which is another example of this retail concept. He frequents the PetSmart at Meacham and Golf Roads where they often have special pet events, including adoptions and doesn't know how they manage animal waste. Ms. Hanlon said that there probably are more dogs going in and out of PetSmart in 3 hours than VEG gets in a 24 or 48-hour period.

Mr. LaRosa said he foresees the two proposed landscape islands in front of the store may become "poop islands."

Mr. Dolbeare recommended that the Board add a condition that VEG maintain a service log. If one of the neighboring tenants complains about waste problems, the service log can be checked.

Mr. Morreale asked if it's correct that VEG normally has a service maintenance log. Ms. Hanlon said it is not a common practice at all of their facilities, but they do it where municipalities have that concern. She said they have a service log in Texas where staff is required, every six-to-eight hours, to make sure that everything is clean, they log it and keep the logs on file for two months at a time so the municipality can check the logs if they wish.

Mr. Dolbeare said that since VEG is high end, they would not want it unclean. It would not project the image that they want.

**PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED**

Mr. Szurgot made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morreale, to close the hearing.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Mr. Dolbeare made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morreale, to recommend approval of a Special Use for Animal Hospital for Veterinary Emergency Group located at 1287 E. Higgins Road - Park St. Claire Plaza, Case No. Z2312-01, subject to the following conditions:

1. A building permit, in accordance with the current regulations and requirements of the Village of Schaumburg, must be issued within one year from the date of adoption of the enabling ordinance by the Village Board which authorized the development proposal.
2. The floor plan has been accepted as preliminary. The plans will receive a much more detailed review during building permit review.
3. The business must stay in substantial conformance with the submitted business narrative. Boarding and kennel services for animals is not permitted.
4. The following plans shall be adopted as part of the governing ordinance:
  - a. Business narrative, received by the Community Development Department on December 4, 2023.
  - b. Proposed floor plan and elevation packet, received by the Community Development Department on December 4, 2023.
5. Veterinary Emergency Group staff shall maintain a water or neutralizing chemical spray bottle to clean up in case of animal waste accidents on the concrete sidewalk.

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6. Veterinary Emergency Group staff shall maintain a service log for maintenance and cleaning of the front sidewalk and animal waste station.

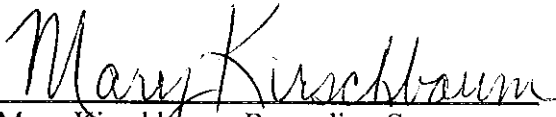
**MOTION CARRIED: vote: 7 - 1 with one member(s) absent**

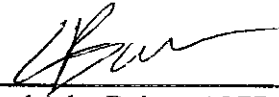
A poll was taken:      Mr. James Dolbeare - Yes  
                                 Ms. Patricia Errera - Yes  
                                 Mr. Mike LaRosa - Yes  
                                 Mr. Rob Morreale - Yes  
                                 Mr. Harry Raimondi - No  
                                 Mr. Pat Riley - Yes  
                                 Mr. Sunil Shah - Absent  
                                 Mr. Glenn Szurgot - Yes  
                                 Ms. Elizabeth Veatch – Yes

*The Petitioner was advised that this recommendation will be forwarded to the Village Board for consideration at their meeting on Tuesday, 1/23/24.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8pm.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Kirschbaum, Recording Secretary  
Zoning Board of Appeals

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chidochashe Baker, AICP, Community Planner  
I have reviewed the minutes, and they accurately represent the actions taken by the Zoning Board of Appeals