



SAUGATUCK TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT

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May 20th, 2025

City of the Village of Douglas
Sean Homyen, Planning and Zoning Administrator
86 W. Center Street
Douglas, MI 49406

Re: Swingbridge Development Emergency Access Lane – Clarification Letter regarding Site Plan Review #3 for Nederveld Project #24201574 for sheets C-205 for submittals dated 03.06.2025.

Dear PZ Administrator, Homyen,

Thank you for reaching out with your questions regarding the emergency access lane that came up during the planning commission meeting.

To clarify, the widening and adjusted alignment of the emergency access lane was based on current operational needs identified during our department's site evaluation. While I was not full-time with the Fire District at the time of the original site plan approval, we have since evaluated the site as it exists today and identified specific clearance requirements that were not fully addressed in the original design.

One of the key factors prompting the change was the need to provide adequate clearance from the pool fence to connect a 5" large diameter hose (LDH) to the side of an engine or ladder truck. The original site plan approved by consent judgment in 2008 provided zero operational clearance between the emergency access lane and the bushes/fence along the south side of the pool. That lack of space made hose deployment from the side of an apparatus impractical, if not impossible, for safe and efficient fire operations.

Additionally, it appears that building #11 was constructed approximately 2 feet to the south and 2 feet to the west of its location shown on the original approved site plan. This shift further constrained available space between the structure and the fence line, reinforcing the need to adjust the lane's alignment to maintain the necessary clearance for apparatus placement and hose connection.

As a result, the lane was widened to 12 feet and shifted as shown in the amended plans. While the turning radius remains at 28 feet, the primary concern was not about turning movement but about ensuring there is sufficient space for critical hose operations alongside parked fire apparatus.

It's also important to note that my review and approval responsibilities, as governed by the International Fire Code (2015 edition, as adopted by ordinance), do not include commenting on or enforcing distances between emergency access features and adjacent property lines. The fact that the south edge of the



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lane is now closer to the neighboring property is not relevant to the fire code in this instance and therefore was not part of my review.

From a tactical standpoint, it is also likely that we would bring a ladder truck—or potentially a mutual aid ladder truck—into the site via this emergency access lane in the event of a working fire, due to both the height of the structures and the limited maneuvering space on Swingbridge Lane itself. In fact, depending on the conditions, exposure risks from structure density, we may need to position two aerial apparatuses to effectively fight a fire in that area. Without adequate access and working clearance, that type of response would be compromised.

Finally, I would add that from our standpoint, we're eager to see the emergency access lane, which is now proposed to be 2 feet wider than what was required by the 2008 consent judgment—finally installed. This lane was originally supposed to be completed nearly 20 years ago and having it in place will significantly improve emergency access and safety for the entire site.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss it further or if I can provide any additional documentation. I'm happy to assist, however I can within the scope of my authority.

Respectfully Yours,

Chris Mantels

Deputy Chief / Fire Inspector

Cc: Greg Janik – Fire Chief (via email)
Dan Poll – Building Official (via email)
Ric Dyk – Owner Representative (via email)
Joe Milauckas – Neighboring Property Owner (via email)