

Wauwatosa Common Council Meeting

January 27, 2026

Conditional Use Permit Application for 24-hour laundromat at 7105 West North Avenue (the CUP)

City Clerk's Office

Comments of Steven Glaser, owner of and resident at 2263 N. 71st Street

Alderspersons:

Although the notice of meeting indicated I could submit comments via the meeting portal, the portal indicates that e-comments are not available for this meeting and, as public input may not be permitted, I submit the following for your consideration regarding the CUP application.

I have no animus for the applicant nor the intended use of the property, but I am concerned about the negative impact the expansion of the hours of operation will have on my property and the neighborhood. I did not receive notice of the meeting until January 24th when I returned from a trip overseas, so I have not been able to contact the applicant to discuss my concerns. I do note for the record that it appears that no notice of the CUP has been posted at the property though I believe the Municipal Code requires it to be posted during the pendency of the application and approval process.

My property abuts the southern boundary of the property and a majority of the rear of the building (the southern side) is separated from my property by an approximately 8-foot-wide driveway, while the distance between my home and the building is approximately 9 feet at its closest point. Per the south elevation of site plans submitted by applicant, 3 dryer intake louvers face my property; the two eastern louvers being located approximately 7-10 feet from the ground and a 10-foot high louver on the west side of the rear of the building. The easternmost louver faces my front yard, porch and the master bedroom, the middle louver is near the window of my first-floor office and the master bedroom, and the western louver faces my office as well the second floor of my home.

Applicant's site plan does not indicate the location of mechanical systems on the roof nor the direction of the exhaust (hopefully other than directly at my home) that will be level with the second floor of my home, including the master bedroom. I understand laundromat exhaust systems require high velocity air flow and powered exhaust fans and vents to operate continuously when dryers are vented in combination but will not operate when the business is closed and the dryers are idle.

I understand noise levels of up to 100 dB can be generated by exhaust systems, including constant humming and the roaring sound of air moved at high velocities through ductwork, mechanical noise generated by powered exhaust fans and the venting of high-velocity air flow, noise created by the vibration of mechanical components and continuous high-frequency noise from vents that is uncomfortable (and can be unbearable), all of which increase if systems are not continuously maintained and cleaned.

As the Wauwatosa Municipal Code prohibits noise that "unreasonably disturbs the peace and quiet, comfort or repose of persons in the vicinity" it is clear that Wauwatosa recognizes that noise can have a negative impact on adjacent properties. Wauwatosa expressly prohibits the operation of lawnmowers between 10pm and 7am. I understand that lawnmowers produce an average of 80-100 dB and an average

lawn in east Tosa likely requires less than 30 minutes of operation during any week. Therefore, it is clear that loud noises after 10pm are considered detrimental, especially if they could be continuous in nature.

While the Municipal Code does define a loud noises, OSHA standards (29 CFR 1910.95) require hearing protection when persons are exposed to sounds of 85 dB and above and limits noise exposure to 8 hours at an average of 90 dB. I think it reasonable to use this as a standard for an unreasonable disturbance as hearing protection should not be necessary to enjoy the use of one's property.

With that in mind, the slamming of a car door generates more than 100 dB and a car horn 110 dB. The back up warning system on commercial vehicles emit intentionally piercing electronic beeps at 85-115 dB and exhaust fans may generate noise well in excess of 85dB; all of which exceed the requirements for hearing protection per OSHA requirements.

That being said, I accept car doors being slammed, horns being honked to let patrons of the business know that their ride has arrived, the noise generated by mechanical systems and vehicle back up warning systems as part of being a neighbor to a business – during business hours. However, I think it reasonable that noise levels from these sources will be substantially less during the evening and will cease (or at least be minimized) after normal business hours. I also think it safe to say that a level of noise that is acceptable during the day would be unreasonable were it to occur throughout evening, overnight and early morning hours, whether occasionally or continuously. Those living near North Ave. experience abrupt awakenings to the shouts of bar patrons late at night and in early morning hours as well as the sirens of emergency vehicles – however, Wauwatosa limits the operating hours of drinking establishments and sirens are not constant.

The grant of a CUP requires that the uses, values and enjoyment of surrounding properties will not be substantially impaired or diminished by the conditional use. I believe the additional hours of operation will result in substantial impairment for a number of reasons, including noise produced by the mechanical systems of the business and the arrival and departure of patrons of, and suppliers to, the business during the hours of 11 pm to 6 am. I think the substantial impairment of the enjoyment of my property and its use is evident given the additional noise that will be generated by the operation of the business during from and after 11am when residential areas are expected to be peaceful and quiet. Though I would prefer that things quiet down after 5pm, I have accepted that there may be noise through the allowed operations until 11pm, but I do not think it reasonable to require me to endure noise during that late evening and early morning hours.

In addition, the North Avenue overlay requires that the extended business hours must fall within times that are reasonable and customary for the business and will not have a negative impact on adjacent properties.

Though the applicant indicates that 24/7 operation is standard and necessary, I must respectfully disagree. A review of the operating hours of laundromats in the area shows 24-hour laundromats to be the exception rather than the rule and most close between the hours of 6pm and 10pm. In fact, 33% of the applicant's laundromats (2 of 8) are not open 24-hour. I understand that the business may be more competitive and profitable if open 24 hours, but neither are relevant to a determination of whether the hours are reasonable and customary as the market shows that many, if not most, laundromats are able operate profitably while closing before 11 pm.

In connection with the second requirement of the overlay that the additional hours “will not have a negative impact” on adjacent properties, please note that the “negative impact” need not be “substantial” as is in the stated standard for the general CUP approval process – meaning that the negative impact, regardless of whether it is substantial, would mean that the additional hours should not be approved.

I also believe it vitally important for you to review the geographic specifics of the applicant’s 8 laundromats when compared to the proposed North Avenue location to understand the negative impact of the noise that will be produced from 11pm to 6am if the CUP is approved. The distance between the laundromat and its neighbors is critical because sound intensity decreases with distance based on an inverse-square law, resulting in a reduction of approximately 6 dB for each doubling of distance from the source.

The approximate distance between the applicant’s laundromat facilities and the nearest residence are as follows:

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| 1. Bluemound Road – 100 feet | 2. Waukesha – 70 feet |
| 3. Becher – 60 feet | 4. 4515 Forest Home – 90 feet |
| 5. Oklahoma -245 feet | 6. Whitewater – 140 feet |
| 7. 6015 Forest Home – 255 feet (closes at 12am) | 8. S. 103th – 540 feet (closes at 12am) |

The distance to between my home and the proposed laundromat is 9 feet at the closest point (which is likely near to where many of the mechanical systems are or will be located). The next shortest distance to a residence for any of the applicant’s laundromats is 60 feet, 6 times as far away as the distance from my home. The applicant’s Bluemound laundromat in Wauwatosa is 10 times as far away. The much greater distances at applicant’s other laundromats serve to significantly reduce the level of sound experienced by residential neighbors while my residence has 1/10th of the next shortest separation – and my property will suffer the full brunt of any noise generated as I am the closest neighbor. The noise levels experienced by the residences near the North Ave. location will be much greater than all of the applicant’s other locations. Exhaust fans generating 100 dB of noise will register at 91.25 dB at 9-10 feet while registering 74 dB at 60 feet and 40 dB at 100 feet (as is the case on Bluemound Road) – meaning that the sound I would experience will be more than twice as loud as the Bluemound location – all day and all night.

The only other 24-hour business along North Avenue in eastern Wauwatosa would be the Snap Fitness gym, which is separated from the nearest residence by 38 feet, or more than 4 times as far away, and the gym does not involve commercial dryer exhaust vents and fans.

I understand that the facility will not have on-site employees and, therefore, no one will be available to promptly address noise issues as they arise.

It is for these reasons that I believe that CUP should be denied for 24 hour operation as the extended business hours are not reasonable or customary, will negatively impact adjacent properties and will substantially impair the value of my property and my enjoyment of that same.

Respectfully,



Steven Glaser