

SUP12-1, Mr. Joseph Vile

Special Use Permit Application

for a

Commercial Recreation Facility in a B1 Zoning District

Proposed Use and Location

The applicant, Mr. Joe Vile, is seeking a special use permit to operate a commercial recreation facility on a B1 (General Business) zoned property. The proposed commercial recreation facility is a “ropes” style challenge course in which participants navigate an above-ground course. A good description of this type of use is as follows:

Modern ropes courses incorporate sophisticated belay and safety systems using wire rope, friction devices, and climbing harnesses to manage what before were unmanaged risks. Recent technological advances in pole hardware and climbing equipment along with industry-accepted installation and design practices have greatly reduced the risk to end users and to the natural environment. Modern courses make use of a variety of materials other than trees, including utility poles and steel structures. Today's courses can be found in a variety of locations, including wooded areas, open fields, or inside heated buildings.

The use is proposed to be located on a 1-acre portion of a larger 95-acre parcel. The applicant will be partnering with Luray Caverns, and the ropes course is intended to be another tourist/recreation attraction at the Cavern's site. A map detailing the approximately location of the commercial recreation facility is attached to this report.

Operational Specifics

As noted, the course would be operated by Mr. Vile in partnership with the Luray Caverns. Mr. Vile anticipates the course will hire 6 employees during “peak” season to satisfy anticipated demand. The course itself will likely have a “low ropes” challenge area for young children (2 – 7 years old), and a more advanced challenge course for older children and adults.

The course's staff would be identified (in terms of attire) as Cavern's employees. The Luray Caverns would sell tickets for the challenge course at its regular ticketing both, or tickets could be purchased separately at an additional ticketing both located near the entrance of the challenge course. Therefore, visitors to the Caverns could purchase a “package deal” which would include the challenge course, or simply purchase a single ticket for entrance to the challenge course. Mr. Vile has indicated that pricing for the challenge course is still being discussed; however he anticipates that an admissions discount will be offered for local (Page County) visitors to the course.

The challenge course will be a year-round operation with the obvious “peak” season being the late spring and summer months.

Set-up Specifics & Anticipated Opening

Mr. Vile's proposed challenge course is manufactured and constructed on-site by Ropes Courses Incorporated, located in Allegan, Michigan. Representatives from Ropes Courses, Inc will travel to site and set-up/construct the course. In total, it takes roughly 7 days to install the course. Employees of the course are trained by Ropes Courses Inc.'s staff regarding how to properly and safely use the equipment. Mr. Vile indicates that before Ropes Courses' employees arrive to set-up the course, the site's foundation and footers must be in place.

Provided that all approvals and reviews are satisfactorily completed, Mr. Vile hopes to begin operating the challenge course by the end of May 2012.

Comprehensive Plan

An objective of Luray's Comprehensive Plan states "support and encourage entrepreneurial activity related to tourism."

Additional Considerations

- If the proposed special use permit is approved, the applicant will be required to submit a detailed final Site Plan in accordance to section 515 (Site Plan) of the Town Code.
- The subject site's Erosion & Sediment and Stormwater Management plans are required to be submitted to the Page County Building Official for review and approval.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

March 8, 2012

Mr. Vile's request for a special use permit to operate a commercial recreation facility on a (portion) of a B1-zoned parcel appears to an appropriate request. The challenge course would be located at the Luray Caverns – a highly visible and iconic tourist attraction – and the use would diversify the already unique recreational and cultural offerings at the site. The employees of the proposed course would receive training related to how to properly and safely operate the challenge course. It is believed the proposed challenge course would provide the Town of Luray and Page County with another high-value tourist attraction, thus further developing the Town's important tourist economy.

Challenge Course: Approximately Location



Photos from Ropes Courses, Inc.



An inside challenge course



What an outdoor challenge course looks like...