

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 25, 2021 - 3:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Baker, DeJoy, Grill, Hood, Rangel Morales, Reilly, Syed, and Taghioff
STAFF: Kady Dadlez, Sonja Butler, Allan Torstenson, and Peter Warner

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Baker. He stated that the chair of the Planning Commission had determined that due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is neither practical nor prudent for the Zoning Committee to meet in person, and therefore the meeting was being conducted remotely, with all members of the Zoning Committee attending the meeting remotely. The public is also able to join the meeting remotely and can speak during the public hearing portion or submit comments by noon on the day before the meeting.

Provincial House - 20-099-497 - Conditional use permit for emergency housing facility serving 22-30 families, 1880 Randolph Avenue, between Howell Street and Fairview Avenue

Kady Dadlez presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval for the conditional use permit. She said District 15 recommended approval, and there were 67 letters in support, and 5 letters in opposition.

In response to Commissioner Baker, Ms. Dadlez said that there have been no changes to the staff report from the original submittal in December 2020 and the one that is before the Committee today.

Brian Alton, Attorney and member of the Board of Directors of Interfaith Action, 951 Grand Avenue, Saint Paul, was available for questions.

Randi Roth, Executive Director of Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul, 1671 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, said their former name was Saint Paul Area Council of Churches and they are a 115-year-old organization. Interfaith Action believes that opportunity grows, and poverty recedes when people of faith invest themselves in effective action and that is what this program is about. They mobilize and support faith communities who are trying to stabilize their neighbors and achieve economic mobility. Project Home is one of their main program areas. Faith communities in this neighborhood have been successfully hosting the Project Home program for decades.

Sara Liegl, Director of Project Home, 1671 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, said she has been the Director for over 20 years. They have had the pleasure of working with many congregations in the Highland Park and Macalester-Groveland area and have had a long track record of being good neighbors. They hope to continue that with the Provincial House. They provide more than warm meals and cots. This is a program that is run by an amazing staff and a crew of dedicated volunteers that help families heal from the trauma of homelessness. Part of their work is getting families back on their feet and they also have an amazing social work team. They made their record last month and found housing for nine families. Currently 85% of their guests are children under the age of 12 and their youngest guest is only one month old.

Marc Manderscheid, of Taft Stettinius & Hollister Law Offices, and who resides at 2136 Goodrich Avenue in Saint Paul said he has been a volunteer for Interfaith Action for many years, but today he is representing the Sisters of Carondelet. The Sisters have had a long history in Saint Paul directly providing religious, medical, educational, and social service

programs. In this instance they are looking to provide some of their real estate. The Provincial House building has been on the Sisters property for many years and has been empty for the last number of years. The Sisters will be the landlord to Interfaith Action which will provide the direct services. The Sisters are very pleased that this empty real estate will have a new use and will provide a home temporarily to people who need assistance in finding their way back into their own housing. The Sisters would like to continue their ministries through Interfaith Action.

Pastor Javen Swanson, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1515 Sherburne Avenue, Saint Paul, said he is a member of the Board of Interfaith Action. He said Gloria Dei has a decades long relationship with Project Home. They have been sheltering families in their building in the month of December for 20 years. In all of those years of working together Project Home has become a trusted partner. They run a tight ship and they have a wealth of experience helping homeless families transition into permanent housing. They are very good at what they do. On the rare occasion that issues have risen with any of the guests Project Home staff has responded quickly, professionally, and graciously to address the situation. He said that members of their congregation prepare meals and interact with the guests every evening in December. They engage around 150 members of the church each year. The interaction they have with the families who stay in their building has helped them to personalize the issue of homelessness and better understand the dynamics in play for families who are housing insecure. Spending time with Project Home guests helps them to develop empathy and to understand our homeless neighbors as just that, neighbors. Project Home is designed to foster these kinds of relationships, so we aren't just housing people, but transforming lives and transforming our community.

Katie Leclair, 4147 17th Avenue South, Minneapolis, said she works at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. She has seen a great transformation in their membership being able to interact with Project Home guests. She works with the teenagers at their church and she has had conversations with them that met classmates who are guests at Project Home and how that changed their lives to know that they could serve their neighbors in this way and be a great friend in this respect. They love having guests from Project Home in December. They stay in their Sunday school on cots and they have a TV lounge, craft room, and other amenities. It's a beautiful thing, but she looks forward to the guests having a more permanent place while they are waiting to get housing.

Mark Hoppe, 1887 Randolph Avenue, Saint Paul, MN spoke in support. He said currently the definition of family is under review in Saint Paul. The options under consideration for the definition of family are any six adults with one minor child, any five adults can live together or any number of adults who are all related to each other by blood, marriage, guardian, domestic partnership together with minor children in their family, family of four plus any adults who are related to each other by blood, marriage, guardian, domestic partnership as well as four additional members and minors in their care. Because of the significant lack of quantitative definition of number of adults that can encompass a family it seems reasonable that Interfaith Action would provide the maximum number of people that can live in the housing facility. He has asked for this a number of times and he has not received a definitive answer. He thinks because of the significant ambiguity on what family is it would be prudent that there is a total number of people that could live there. He said the definition for emergency housing is much broader than what is being represented. There should be conditions that narrow what the use is.

Eric Celeste, 1993 Lincoln Avenue, Saint Paul, spoke in support. He said he is excited that the Sisters are offering them a chance to house people who need this kind of help in our neighborhood. He looks forward to the opportunity to work with Interfaith Action.

No one spoke in opposition. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Grill moved approval of the conditional use permit. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

Commissioner Grill said she has not seen so many unique letters of support on any case since she has been on the Planning Commission. She is overjoyed at the number of volunteers within this organization that were willing to these write letters.

Commissioner Hood said this is a great project and the work that has been put in by the applicant is fantastic. He said that it was heartwarming to read all of the letters of support. He lives nearby to where this is being proposed and he is very happy to have this in his neighborhood.

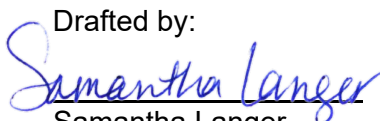
Commissioner Tagihoff said he also read through the overwhelmingly positive testimony and reviewed the plans. He said this is a well thought out and executed plan.

Commissioner Reilly echoes his fellow Commissioners comments. It is nice to see the large amount of support for this project. It is exciting to see a large facility being reused in such a way that helps those that need it.

Commissioner Baker also said he echoes his fellow Commissioners comments. He has volunteered for Project Home and he sees how faith institutions have provided service and support. It is good to see how this organization is helping with homelessness and reusing a space that has been vacant for a good purpose.

The motion passed by a vote of 8-0-0.

Adopted Yeas - 8 Nays - 0 Abstained - 0

Drafted by:

Samantha Langer
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:

Kady Dadlez (Mar 12, 2021 09:33 CST)
Kady Dadlez
City Planner

Approved by:

Cedrick Baker (Mar 12, 2021 10:27 CST)
Cedrick Baker
Chair









20-099-497 Provincial House minutes 2-25-21 KDedits

Final Audit Report

2021-03-12

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