

Ozaukee Christian School's proposal for facility at Friedens Church sparks protests about traffic, parking

A proposal by Ozaukee Christian School to open a preschool at Friedens Church this fall hit a snag Tuesday after several neighbors objected to the use.

"It is a residential neighborhood. I'd like to protect the integrity of it," said Stacey Berg, 431 N. Milwaukee St. "I'm concerned with traffic on a daily basis, with the noise. Our street is extremely narrow."

Celia Shaughnessy, 425 N. Milwaukee St., concurred.

"We have a lot of children in our neighborhood," she said, and traffic is a major concern.

Parking is another concern, added Jane Kircher, 504 Harrison St.

Principal Kris Austin said she would work with the neighbors to alleviate their concerns.

"I give you my pledge we will work with you as a good neighbor," she told the residents during a public hearing on a conditional use permit for the preschool.

Austin told the Common Council that plans are to have two preschool classes of 10 to 12 students during the first year. If the demand is there, the preschool could expand in the future, she added.

Classes would be in the morning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, she said.

Austin noted that from 1992 to 1995 Ozaukee Christian School was located in Friedens Church, 454 N. Milwaukee St.

More than 50 children attended the school then, she said.

"We didn't, to my knowledge, have any problems with our neighbors," she said. "We did our best and it seemed to work."

Friedens isn't going to be home to the preschool forever, Austin said.

"We're not seeing this as a long-term solution," she said.

"In our heart of hearts, we would like to bring the preschool to our school," she said, noting that kindergarten through eighth grade classes are held in Immaculate Conception School in Saukville.

Preschool plan for church riles neighbors

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Housing the preschool and elementary classes in one building would result in significant efficiencies to their operation, Austin said.

But despite Austin's pledge to work with the neighbors to alleviate their concerns, the neighbors were adamant.

"I appreciate that, but it doesn't matter," Berg said. "A daily preschool is not something I would be behind."

Neighbors are willing to live with the noise and traffic during the annual Vacation Bible School, but regular classes during the school year are different, she noted.

"This is everyday," Berg said.

Ald. Jim Vollmar suggested the city could place a limit on the number of students enrolled during the first year and review the conditional use permit after that time to see how it works.

Aldermen voted 5-2, with Dan Becker and Dave Larson opposing, to table action on the permit until their Wednesday, June 6, meeting. This, they said, would give school officials a chance to meet with neighbors and try to hammer out an agreement with them over the preschool.

Ald. Paul Neumyer also suggested the Police Department look at traffic concerns in the neighborhood.

"I would like to slow this down a little bit so they (the school) can talk to the neighbors and we can talk to police about the traffic," he said.