

PLANNING COMMISSION

October 21, 2010

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of October 21, 2010 was called to order by Chairman Cheesebro at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately 140 citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cory Bailes, Mark Siegfried, Paul Welch, Rick Bosch, Jim Pearson, Miko Dargitz, Wayne Stoffer, Bill Patterson, and Chairman James Cheesebro.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Christopher Barnes, Director of Transportation and Utilities; Michael West, Assistant City Planner; and Randall Brown, City Attorney

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Planning Commission, staff and the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Cheesebro referred the Commission to the October 7, 2010 meeting minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, to approve the minutes as submitted. The minutes were unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Preliminary Report: Valley Family Church – Kalamazoo, 2500 Vincent Avenue, Special Land Use Permit Review. Mr. Forth introduced the item and summarized the preliminary staff report dated October 15, 2010 regarding the one-year review of the previously approved Special Land Use Permit for the Valley Family Church – Kalamazoo (VFC-K). Mr. Forth reviewed the six Special Land Use Permit conditions and three site plan conditions associated with the May 1, 2008 Planning Commission approval. Mr. Forth also summarized the request by VFC-K to modify two conditions of approval, which include a reduction in the setback for temporary buildings or structures along the north property line and north ½ of the west property line from 150-feet to no more than 50-feet and the elimination of the “No Right-Turn, Local Traffic Only” sign along the western driveway. Mr. Barnes summarized the Traffic Impact Report prepared by the Department of Transportation and Utilities. Mr. Barnes provided background information regarding the jurisdiction (City of Portage, City of Kalamazoo and MDOT) of the adjacent roadway system, discussed traffic counts taken before and after construction of the VFC-K facility, summarized the traffic signal warrant analysis and the findings/conclusions of the study. Mr. Barnes

stated that installation of a traffic signal at the Oakland Drive/Vincent Avenue intersection or the programming of other street improvements in this area is not warranted at this time. Mr. Barnes stated the presence of traffic control services at the Oakland Drive/Vincent Avenue intersection before and after VFC-K services has been effective and the intersection will continue to be monitored by city staff for future improvements, if necessary.

Mr. Dan Dalton (attorney representing VFC-K) was present to discuss the one-year review of the approved special land use permit. Mr. Dalton stated that VFC-K has complied with all conditions established by the Planning Commission and indicated the traffic control services agreement between VFC, the City of Portage and City of Kalamazoo was renewed for a two year period. Mr. Dalton stated that VFC-K has a good relationship with the majority of the neighbors and has taken proactive measures to address expressed concerns. As cited by the traffic report, Mr. Dalton indicated that an average of 92% of all vehicles exiting the VFC-K after services turn left and travel east on Vincent Avenue. The remaining 8% turn right and travel west on Vincent Avenue. Mr. Dalton stated that VFC-K has four specific requests for Planning Commission consideration during the special land use permit review: 1) Eliminate the requirement to submit bi-monthly attendance reports (Condition 2, Special Land Use Permit); 2) Eliminate the requirement that the center driveway be gated and only utilized during special events at the cathedral (Condition 1, Site Plan); 3) Reduce the setback for outdoor placement of temporary buildings and structures along north and west property lines from 150-feet to not more than 50-feet (Condition 6, Special Land Use Permit); and 4) Remove the "No Right-Turn, Local Traffic Only" sign at the western driveway (Condition 3, Site Plan). Additionally, Mr. Dalton requested that the public hearing be adjourned until the November 18, 2010 meeting.

Chairman Cheesebro opened the public hearing. A total of 11 citizens spoke during the public hearing: Joe Bippus, 1304 New Jersey Court, Three Rivers, MI; Dan Smith, 3022 Fleetwood Drive; Mark Wollam, 5235 Greenhill Street; Nancy VanderRoest, 2918 East Shore Drive; Gerard Mouatt, 5211 Greenhill Street; Melody Nedrud, 3427 Wedgewood Drive; Paul Morris, 5246 Angling Road; Ken Hovancamp, 14920 South 22nd Street, Vicksburg, MI; Marie McKinley, 2917 Brynmawr Court; Lorie Johnson, 6294 Independence Drive; and Wayne Colwell, 1133 West Kilgore Road. Mr. Bippus spoke in support of VFC-K stating the traffic control services has been very effective and the church has made good faith efforts to address neighbor concerns. Mr. Smith stated the "No Right Turn, Local Traffic Only" sign has been effective at minimizing traffic through the neighborhood and requested it remain. Mr. Wollam asked for clarification regarding certain elements of the traffic report and expressed concerns regarding ongoing noise, parking lot lighting, vehicle headlights and the adequacy of the berm and screening installed by VFC-K. Ms. VanderRoest spoke in support of VFC-K stating the church is the most appropriate use for the property and asked that the conditions regarding the sign, use of center driveway and setbacks for outdoor activities be eliminated. Mr. Mouatt questioned the findings of the traffic report and indicated that noise from the VFC-K is still a concern. Ms. Nedrud complimented VFC-K on efforts made to address traffic and other neighborhood concerns and requested the "No Right Turn, Local Traffic Only" sign remain to minimize traffic on Angling Road. Mr. Morris stated noise and light issues appear to be minor and easily mitigated, requested that restrictions regarding sign and use of center driveway be lifted and asked that the city continue to consider installation of a traffic light at the Oakland Drive/Vincent Avenue intersection to address school and bus related traffic. Mr. Hovancamp commended the City of Portage regarding efforts to direct traffic at the Oakland Drive/Vincent Avenue intersection and stated that VFC-K would like to continue to work with the neighbors at addressing concerns. Ms. McKinley stated that VFC-K has been a very good neighbor, requested the "No Right Turn, Local Traffic Only" sign remain and indicated that she can still see parking lot and vehicle headlights from her residence. Ms. Johnson and Mr. Colwell both spoke in support of VFC-K. No additional citizens spoke during the public hearing.

Mr. Dalton responded to the citizen comments and restated that noise continues to be mitigated and berming/screening at the VFC-K site exceeds standards detailed on the approved site plan. Mr. Dalton indicated one neighbor in particular continues to harass church members and officials; however, VFC-K will continue to work with neighbors at addressing concerns, when and where reasonable. Attorney Brown commended VFC-K and Mr. Wollam at efforts to resolve noise issues and stated the process was ongoing.

** The Commission took a short recess at 9:00 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 9:05 p.m. **

After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to adjourn the public hearing for the Special Land Use Permit review for Valley Family Church – Kalamazoo, 2500 Vincent Avenue, until the November 18, 2010 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved. Commissioner Pearson indicated that he would not be present at the November 18, 2010 meeting.

PLATS/RESIDENTIAL CONDOS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2010-2011 City Council Assigned Goals and Objectives Update (November 2010). Mr. West summarized the staff report dated October 15, 2010 and referred the Commission to the draft transmittal to City Council. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to forward the transmittal regarding FY 2010-2011 Planning Commission Goals and Objectives Update (November 2010), as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services