



By Amanda Haverstick / Jul 12, 2007

Homeless Shelter Gets Nod To Move Into New Home

MICHIGAN CITY - The Michigan City Homeless Shelter has the OK to move into its new home.

The Michigan City Board of Zoning Appeals approved Citizens Concerned for the Homeless Inc.'s request Tuesday for a use variance to locate a homeless shelter at the former rectory of Sacred Heart Church, 1005 W. Eighth St. Four BZA members - Don Przybylinski, Al Whitlow, Tim Wilson and John Morse - voted in favor of the variance. Board member G. Wallace Hook was absent.

An emergency shelter, the Michigan City Homeless Shelter's focus is serving families with children from the LaPorte County area. Previously located at 120 W. Ninth St., the shelter had four rooms with a capacity of 19 people. The new homeless shelter will be a five-bedroom dwelling.

"The church has, in fact, deeded ownership of the adjacent parcel to Citizens Concerned for the Homeless," said attorney John Espar, who also is president of Citizens Concerned for the Homeless. "We have already begun the process of separating the utilities."

The shelter will have playground equipment for children staying there and have sufficient green space.

"Father James McGrogran and Bishop Dale Melczek were generous enough to have also donated a vacant lot that is behind the church," Espar said, "so we have a large amount of green space that is immediately adjacent to the park along which the rectory itself sits."

Espar said the organization would consider expanding the facility in the future.

"Never say never," Espar said. "If funding should come our way, of course we'll explore that, but not without going through the natural procedures to get approval for any further renovation."

Zoning Administrator Joe Siegel said there were no objections from the water and sanitation departments, but added the building must be inspected by the fire marshal and building inspector.

"In realizing minimal basic needs, food, clothing and shelter are obviously important to everyone in our community, as well as providing to those less fortunate, the (planning) department would recommend approval," Siegel said.

In June 2004, the BZA approved a special-use variance that would have allowed Citizens Concerned for the Homeless to build a 20-room shelter at 828 Pine St., but the decision was reversed by LaPorte County Superior Court 2 Judge Stephen King in March 2005.

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