

PLANNING COMMISSION

Notes/Public Hearing

February 15, 2007

I. ROLL CALL

Fred Walstrom	Absent
Andrew Bowman	Absent
Jack Deegan	Absent
Jeff Ford	Present
Mary Ellen Hughes	Present
Laura Kors	Present
Sheryl McCleery	Absent
Peter Sears	Present
Sara Smith	Absent

Also present were City Planner Larry Nix, City Attorney Jim Ramer and City Manager Fred Geuder.

The City Manager noted that a quorum was not present, but that the Public Hearing had been advertised, so comments should be taken.

Peter Sears called the hearing to order at 6:00 p.m.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE

None. (See public hearing for correspondence related to the Holy Childhood issue.)

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Hearing on Proposed SLU-2007-02—Holy Childhood Projects

The City Manager noted that correspondence had been received from the following:

David Kimble	Harbor Springs	Concerns about historic structure
William Horvath	180 W. Third	Concerns about the Site Plan
David O'Neil		Concerns about architecture

The correspondence is on file at City Hall.

Dan Gorman, on behalf of Holy Childhood, introduced Father Joseph Graff of Holy Childhood, to review the history of the proposed project.

Father Graff said that the current project went back to about three years ago when the parish had an engineering study done on the old school, the convent and the parish hall. The parish hall was subsequently demolished.

After that study, the parish then went through a Visioning Process to determine what direction the parish was headed for and what resources would be needed to accomplish those goals. Following that process, these plans were developed.

Father Graff noted that a building oversight committee first thoroughly studied the buildings and then determined that a new building was the best way to go. The parish now has a finance committee to oversee construction of the building.

Father Graff noted that the parish involved the community in its process. The final result of that process is not only a design for the building, but a plan for the building as a community resource.

Gorman then reviewed the plans.

Gorman noted that as a member of the building oversight (design) committee his first thought was to preserve the building. But as the process went forward, it became clear that the building was not designed for what the uses today were envisioned to be, and as the committee investigated whether the existing building could be re-used, the escalating costs became prohibitive.

Gorman said that the first part of the project would be to add a narthex (gathering area) to the church, extending the gable out from the existing structure, but maintaining the architectural details. This would require a height variance in order to match the roof line, which is 48' tall. A similar variance was obtained when the church was remodeled some time ago.

A covered drive-thru entry at the north entrance to the church would be added, and a covered walkway to the parish center would also be added. People would still be able to pass through the area from Third Street to Main Street.

The second part of the project would be to demolish the existing school and convent, and build a new multi-purpose parish center, including replacing the parish hall that was demolished about three years ago.

The new building would be set back a little from where the existing school sits, so that the Main Street view of the church would be maintained. Gorman noted that following receipt of the correspondence, the Site Plan would be changed to eliminate the middle curb cut on Third, and the covered entry to the parish hall would be reduced to one lane, setting that back further.

The new building would be a 1.5 story structure (no second floor over the parish center). The basement may provide usable space, but its first use would be for mechanical needs.

The parish hall portion of the building is proposed to be 45' tall in order to maintain the same architectural look as the church. This would require a variance. Gorman noted that the existing school building is three stories and 48' tall.

Sears opened the floor to public comment.

No further comments were received.

Sears closed the public hearing.

B. Planning Commission Discussion on SLU-2007-02—Holy Childhood

Planner Larry Nix noted that the existing school building was very old (1916). In any case such as this, there are concerns over making a major change. Nix noted that City Ordinances do not prohibit the removal of an old building. He further noted that the owners of the building, the church, have determined that a new building will better fit their programming needs.

Nix noted that the scale of the site plan was not 1/40 as stated. Prior to the Planning Commission making a final decision, the applicant will need to submit a corrected copy. It does not appear to create any problems with the proposed structure, but a new drawing must be submitted.

Nix also noted that better detail on lighting needs to be provided. Gorman said that the church planned to use similar lighting to what is on the church area.

Nix noted that elimination of the curb cut was a good idea, but that he would like to be sure that traffic could still pass through outside of the covered overhang, so that there is two-way traffic.

Nix also noted the concern from a neighbor about noise, and suggested one idea is to have landscaping between the parking lot and sidewalk similar to the lilac hedge further west by the church.

Nix also noted that any approval by the Planning Commission would be subject to the applicant receiving a variance on the height issues. Nix also noted that the use meets the Special Land Use criteria.

Nix said in summary that the new structure will be different, but the focal point of the property from a Main Street approach will still be church and steeple. A new facility will be more functional and cost efficient for the church.

Sears asked Commission members if they had any questions.

Ford asked what part of the existing building is being used currently.

Gorman noted the uses that were no longer there or would be moving, such as the Day Care and the Thrift Shop. He also noted that the amount of work to bring the existing building up to code and for the uses desired is enormous.

In reply to a question, Gorman noted that the new building would have roughly 21,000 square feet of usable space, not including the basement. The existing buildings have about 70,000 square feet of space, including the basement. The new parish hall would use 6,000 square feet of the new space.

Hughes noted that the financial cost to renovate meant that the project would cost millions more.

Kors noted that a 1.5 story building is in reality a two-floor structure.

Kors asked for and received clarification on what portions of the proposed structure needed the height variances. She also noted that a new drawing to scale will be helpful.

Kors also noted that she was pleased to see the architectural details of the church and old school replicated on the proposed structure.

The City Manager noted that some of the changes Gorman discussed will help with the concerns of the neighbor, but he also noted that the church needs to be pro-active in monitoring the uses of the parish hall, so that it does not become an issue in the future.

Sears asked David O'Neil, who submitted a letter, whether he had toured the building. O'Neil said he had not.

Sears asked what the schedule for the project was anticipated.

Dennis Wiggins noted that plans were to have demolition completed by July 30th (beginning after July 4th). Part of the demolition process will be asbestos abatement. It is then hoped that construction will commence approximately by September 1st.

The City Manager noted that the Commission would take up the issue at their regular meeting scheduled for March 15th. He also asked Gorman to get him the updated site plan.

V. MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the hearing was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 15, 2007, at 6:00 p.m.

Frederick W. Geuder, City Manager

Holy Childhood
Correspondence
February 15, 2007

2-10	David Kimble	Harbor Springs	Concerns about historic structure
2-12	William Horvath	180 W. Third	Concerns about Site Plan
2-16	David O'Neil		Concerns about architecture