

Questions about about building plans

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 25 October 2012 13:51 -



Public hearing for The Crossing's family center kept open

Members of The Crossing church will have to wait until another public hearing to see if they can get a special use permit to construct a church and family life center.

At the Oct. 16 meeting of the Gothenburg City Council, questions were raised at a hearing about the church's plan to build a \$2 to \$5 million facility in the northeast part of the city.

City officials said all churches must apply for a special use permit.

If one is granted and if enough funds are raised, elder pastor Eric Most said they'd like to begin Phase I construction of an approximate 36,000 square-foot building south of Hilltop Estates Care Center this spring.

Most said the family life center would include a gym, weights and fitness equipment, an archery range, climbing wall, golf simulator, indoor track, coffee shop and bookstore, reception hall and an area for children's programs.

Crossing members say they want to minister to the emotional, social, physical and spiritual needs of the community.

Phase II, estimated at 22,350 square feet, has an auditorium and indoor swimming pool.

The council had kept open an Oct. 2 hearing, awaiting a recommendation from the planning & zoning commission, and sought more information about the project.

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A tie vote at the commission's Oct. 9 meeting, to send the request to the city council, resulted in no action taken.

Because of the scope of the project, council members wrangled with what needs to be specified in the permit and whether more than one will be needed.

City attorney Mike Bacon recommended the council be as detailed as they think appropriate.

Most said the original plan is their "dream package" and includes everything they want if they can raise the money.

Once the floor plan is decided, he said they will analyze costs and begin fund raising.

"We won't begin construction until we have enough money to close it in and finish it on the outside," he said, noting that they would apply for another special use permit for Phase II.

Special use permits are granted for a year in which construction must begin.

Building permits must also be obtained with construction progress shown each year or they are declared void.

Nine citizens asked questions or commented on the plan at the Oct. 16 hearing.

A handful were concerned about drainage problems if a parking area is paved.

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Church member Roger Tederman pointed out that a ditch on the west side of Avenue M will most likely take care of water issues.

City administrator Bruce Clymer noted that water from the ditch runs into a storm sewer, with other runoff from the area, that impacts pipes and people downstream. He suggested that drainage be addressed in a building permit which didn't happen when a new doctor's clinic was built.

"We need to be more active in looking at it," Clymer said.

A couple of citizens also expressed concern about increased traffic in an area with an abundance of small children and how the center might affect property values.

Matt Olsen, who owns nearby property, wondered about the center affecting his privacy and whether lights from the parking would hinder his sleep.

Another property owner, Greg Viergutz, suggested that the city not open 23rd St.—as requested by the church as an entry and exit—and use Avenue M for that purpose.

Council member Gary Fritch said he doesn't have a problem with the project but wants to limit the permit to Phase I.

Jeff Kennedy, council president, said he needs more time to figure out restrictions in the permit.

"If the project goes forward, I want the neighbors to be happy," he said.

Mayor Joyce Hudson said she thought the council favored the idea.

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Bacon suggested that Crossing members meet with the city engineer, council representatives and neighbors. The meeting took place Tuesday night.

“I’d love the idea to sit down and work through this,” Most said, noting that they don’t want to alienate neighbors. “We want them to use the facility.”

The hearing will be continued at a special council meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 30, in city council chambers.

Council members did approve a request for a special use permit for Jim Purintun to build a storage building on his property at 120 16th St.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636