The Crossing can now move on with plans to build family life center

The process for a special use permit for The Crossing church members to build a church and family life center is finally resolved.

Church members requested a permit to build a $2-$5 million facility in a residential area south of Hilltop Estates Care Center.

After a month of continued public hearings, and a meeting with church and council member, the council voted unanimously to grant the permit at its Oct. 30 meeting.

During a 45-minute public hearing, the council and church members parties hammered out conditions agreeable to both.

During the hearing, Mayor Joyce Hudson and several council members asked for more specifics like an architect's rendering of the building front and the type of roof and siding materials planned.

Gary Fritch, a council member, said the council wanted to protect the integrity of the neighborhood.

Council president Jeff Kennedy said he thought the proposed structure is a great idea and in a good location but said neighbors in the Hilltop area had concerns about the structure.

"I feel we've not been given enough information to make a decision," Kennedy said.

The council was given a one-dimensional scale drawing of the building at the first public hearing but Kennedy said he'd like to see a two-dimensional plan.

"I know we didn't ask for that before and I hope you don't feel like we're stringing you along," he said.

Crossing elder Eric Most said church members want a facility that architecturally complements the neighborhood.

A drawing of the elevation of the building front is doable, he said, but it might not look like the end result.

"I don't want to misrepresent what it's going to be but without a cost analysis and full set of plans, I can't do it," Most said.

At one point, he said he didn't want the public hearings to continue to drag on.

"If we know the questions, we'll answer them to the best of our ability but at some point you need to make a decision," Most said.

City attorney Mike Bacon said an application for a special use permit for a funeral home several years ago was also scrutinized.

"The public doesn't want a pole barn with metal siding and a metal roof," Bacon said.

Near the end of the hearing, Fritch presented a permit proposal with several conditions which included:

that the site plan is acceptable as a general plan for the development of the area and that all building permits shall be approved using the plan which is not to exceed a 60,000 square-foot maximum.

the special use permit will allow for the construction of a community center, an auditorium to be used for religious purposes, child day care, preschool and athletic center, subject to the proper building permits being acquired.

access to the facility shall be from Avenue M and the drive must be hard surfaced from Avenue M to the property line.

that 23rd Street will not be opened.

that screening or buffers between the land acquired by The Crossing and neighbors shall be reviewed by the city engineer during application for a building permit. Any issues will be resolved by the city council.

that each building on the site shall comply with requirements for metal buildings in C-1 district that are in the core business district and maintain 50-foot setbacks from the property line.

The council then closed the hearing and approved the permit with the exception of a portion Bacon will develop that deals with storm water runoff.

That portion will be approved at a later date.

Special use permits give builders a year to begin construction.

Building permits must also be obtained which require that continuous construction must be shown within six months or they are declared void.

Because they are typically built in areas zoned residential, churches must apply for a special use permit.

Most said church members will now work with architect Pat Phelan of DLR Group of Omaha who has donated his services. They will then“kick into a fund-raising mode.”

DLR Group of Omaha is the architectural firm that planned the new high school and other projects.

Church officials would like to start construction this spring.

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