

Angry reactions to PADS sadden local ministers

July 10, 2008

Recommend (2)

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The Rev. Carl Morello, pastor of St. Paul of the Cross Church in Park Ridge, said he will reflect on comments made by parents and parishioners before deciding on the next step regarding a proposal to open a homeless shelter site at the parish.

"I need to take some time to think about all that I heard and process it and reflect on it, and also consult with other people who need to be a part of this decision," Morello said.

Among those consulted will be members of the Park Ridge Ministerial Association, a group of local religious leaders who initially brought the concept of opening a Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) site for the homeless to the table. Originally, the site was to have been located at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 306 S. Prospect Ave., but following objections from neighboring residents, it was announced that St. Paul would host the weekly shelter on Sunday nights from October through April.

"I stepped up to the plate because I feel we can do this program, and I feel that St. Paul of the Cross, being the largest church in the Park Ridge area, should take a leadership role," Morello said this week.

The relocation, however, has generated greater opposition, mainly from concerned parents of children attending St. Paul of the Cross School. During Monday night's meeting for St. Paul parishioners, the Rev. Amity Carrubba of St. Mary's Episcopal Church expressed sadness over the anger and division that has been created by the PADS proposal.

"I never wanted this to happen," she said, her voice breaking.

Morello, who has taken heat from angry parents, said he, too, was saddened by the outcome.

"This was not my intent, it certainly wasn't the Ministerial Association's intent to cause any division, but we all know in scripture it says, 'There will be division to try and follow the Gospel message.' That's just the way it is," he said.

On July 21, the Park Ridge City Council is expected to discuss a recommendation from the Procedures and Regulations Committee to require St. Paul to go through the special use permit process and receive city approval in order to open the PADS shelter.

Parishioner Dan Knight asked Morello whether he would apply for a special use permit. Morello said he needs to discuss that with the Ministerial Association, but added that because the group considers the PADS site a ministry, the association's members do not believe government approval is necessary.