

Updated 10/30: Mayor: Journeys may stop PADS shelter proposal for Park Ridge

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The Park Ridge Ministerial Association's plans to partner with Palatine-based Journeys from PADS to HOPE to offer a weekly shelter for the area's homeless in Park Ridge has hit another snag.

Park Ridge Mayor Howard Frimark announced during Wednesday night's City Council meeting that Journeys' executive director Beth Nabors informed him by telephone message that the organization "would not be expanding their services to include Park Ridge."

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Frimark said Nabors did not provide a reason for the decision, although he believes Journeys officials "got fed up" with the scrutiny placed upon the organization by Park Ridge.

Frimark received Nabors' announcement on Wednesday (Oct. 29), two days after he presented her with the copy of a drafted license agreement that would have made the city, Journeys and the Ministerial Association partners in hosting a Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) site at the city's Public Service Center, 400 Busse Highway.

As a result of Journeys' desire to not provide support for a PADS site in Park Ridge, Frimark said the proposal to locate the shelter in the Public Works building is "off the table." However, a text amendment setting regulations for temporary, overnight shelters in general -- as well as licensing requirements for them -- is still before the City Council. Additional discussion on these items will take place at the council's next meeting on Monday, Nov. 17, Frimark said. Citizen comments will be taken as well.

If a PADS site opened in Park Ridge, Journeys' role would include providing a list of registered clients who would be accepted into the shelter, performing criminal background checks on clients, performing health screenings on clients and providing volunteer training.

Jennifer Conlon, a Park Ridge resident, teacher and PADS volunteer, expressed disappointment with the decision made by Journeys, as well as attempts taken by the city to put restrictions upon the operation of shelters and what operators need to do to host them. Journeys is not required to sign license agreements or apply for a special use permit in the 10 other suburban communities where PADS sites operate.

"All PADS wanted to do was offer help to churches that wanted help," Conlon said, adding, "I think the city should just step away."

Dan Knight, a supporter of regulations on shelters, said there is concern that now the Ministerial Association might attempt to open a homeless shelter at a Park Ridge church without obtaining approval from the City Council.

"I hope they don't," he said. "Everyone should be subject to the city's rules and regulations. A church is not exempt."

Public opposition to the Ministerial Association's plans to host a PADS site in St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church's parish life center led Frimark to propose the Public Works Service Center as an alternative.