

Updated 9/9: Proposed zoning rules would block PADS at St. Paul of Cross

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Recommend

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By a vote of 5-4, the Park Ridge Planning and Zoning Commission took action Sept. 8 to recommend that temporary overnight shelters not be allowed to operate within 500 feet of schools, a move that could block a local church's plans to host a weekly shelter for the homeless.

Commissioners Aurora Austriaco, Anita Rifkind, Milda Roskiewicz, Louis Arrigoni, and Cathy Piche voted in favor of a motion to restrict temporary shelters from opening within 500 feet of schools, child daycare centers and nursery schools. Voting against the motion were Chairperson Alfredo Marr and commissioners Joe Baldi, Thomas Provencher and Mary Wells.

The stipulation -- along with other standards approved by the commission as part of a text amendment to allow shelters to operate within the city as special uses -- will go on to the Park Ridge City Council for final approval. The council will probably begin discussions on the proposed text amendment during a special meeting on Sept. 29, said Carrie Davis, acting director of community development.

The issue of making overnight shelters special uses under Park Ridge's Zoning Ordinance was raised after plans were announced by the Park Ridge Ministerial Association to host a Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) site at a local church. In June, St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church, 320 W. Washington St., agreed to be the host site and house the weekly shelter in the Morello Parish Life Center, a building connected to St. Paul of the Cross School and used by students as a gym and multi-purpose room.

If the City Council agrees to the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation to restrict shelters from opening within 500 feet of schools, St. Paul will not be allowed to host a PADS site on its campus.

The proposal to establish a 500-ft. restriction came from a number of St. Paul parents opposed to a PADS site where their children attend school.

Other standards that the Planning and Zoning Commission is recommending be met by temporary, overnight shelters include the following:

- * No shelter shall be located within 1,000 feet of another shelter, unless the city finds that the shelter will not add to adverse impact to neighboring properties.
- * Each shelter must have exits, lighting and parking that minimizes traffic congestion, pedestrian hazards and adverse impacts on neighboring properties.
- * The maximum number of occupants allowed, including staff, will be determined by a formula of dividing the square footage of each sleeping area by 80.
- * All shelters must comply with federal, state and local requirements, including licensing, health, safety and building code requirements.
- * The owner and operator of the shelter will be required to obtain a license for the operation prior to seeking a special use permit.
- * The application for a special use permit shall be made by the "owner of the premises and any other entity providing program support for the temporary, overnight shelter."
- * Shelters will not be allowed to operate for longer than 12 hours within a 24-hour period.

* Shelters shall not be located in any hotel, motel, hospital, nursing home, community residence, rooming house, assisted living facility, independent living facility, or single-family or multi-family residence.

* Shelters that open in the event of an emergency or disaster, or occasional overnight events sponsored by the owner of a facility, will not be required to obtain a special use permit.

Commissioners Austriaco and Roskiewicz voted against sending the revised text amendment to the City Council for approval.

Austriaco expressed concern that allowing homeless shelters, even as special uses, would create a safety issue in the community. Roskiewicz said she could not support a text amendment that does not include a provision protecting the city from incurring expenses for police and fire service required by a temporary shelter.