

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE EDINA PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 1998
7:30 P.M., CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair, Gordon Johnson; Helen McClelland, Ann Swenson, David Byron, John Lonsbury, David Runyan, Geof Workinger, Charles Ingwalson and Lorelei Bergman

STAFF PRESENT: Craig Larsen, Fran Hoffman, Jackie Hoogenakker

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

Commissioner Byron moved approval of the February 25, 1998, minutes with the following correction, remove (“out of the eight presented in the CPC booklet”) pg. 13. Commissioner McClelland seconded the motion. All vote aye; motion carried.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

C-98-1	Conditional Use Permit Christ Presbyterian Church 6901 Normandale Road Building Expansion Proposal
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Chair Johnson addressed members of the Commission and audience informing them Mr. Larsen, Mr. Jarvis, and Mr. Brown are limited to 15 minutes for their presentation. After their presentations have been made Chair Johnson said he will ask for questions from the Commission, then open the hearing to the public. Chair Johnson said he would like each person to state their name, address, and limit their comments. Chair Johnson asked the audience to refrain from applause.

Mr. Peter Jarvis, representing the proponent Christ Presbyterian Church and members of the Church development team were present. Mr. Brown, president of the Woodhill Neighborhood Association was present. Members of the Woodhill Neighborhood Association were present and supporters of the Church were present.

Mr. Larsen presented his staff report asking the Commission to note before them this evening are revised expansion plans. Mr. Larsen pointed out the revised site plan

is similar to the original Option 3 plan. The revised proposal presented this evening is the only proposal to be considered.

Mr. Larsen explained for this proposal to be completed certain actions must occur. The revised proposal is subject to vacation of West 69th Street, and the platting process (subdivision) for the proposed two lots.

Mr. Larsen concluded the revised site plans retains the advantages offered by the plan originally supported by staff while offering some improvements. Mr. Larsen stated a Planning Commission recommendation for approval should be conditioned on:

1. Vacation of existing 69th Street right-of-way, and dedication of a new right-of-way as illustrated on the revised plan.
2. Developer's Agreement to cover construction of a new street.
3. All necessary permits from the Watershed District and MNDOT.
4. Modification of new curb cuts per recommendation of the Director of Public Works.

Mr. Jarvis addressed the Commission informing them he believes the revised plan is an exciting new compromise. Continuing, Mr. Jarvis stated it was hard to get a handle on exactly what the neighborhood desired. Mr. Jarvis said he met with Mr. Brown, and the church also held another neighborhood meeting. At that meeting the design team concluded some members of the neighborhood objected to all 4 options, resulting in members of the design team sitting down and drafting a compromise plan. That plan is before you this evening. Mr. Jarvis asked the Commission to note the church spoke with the Marty family (6816 Brittany Road), and made an offer to purchase their home. That offer was accepted. This acquisition afforded the church the opportunity to create two new lots on West 69th Street. Mr. Jarvis acknowledged the church will have to come before the Commission and Council to subdivide these lots, but preliminary calculations indicate the proposed new lots meet neighborhood standards. Regarding West 69th Street, Mr. Jarvis explained the proposal now sifts the street less dramatically. Mr. Jarvis pointed out because of this realignment, and the acquisition of the Marty home there will be no loss of homes north of West 69th Street. Mr. Jarvis also informed the Commission the church will "get out of" the rental property business, and sell the houses they currently rent after the landscaping of the church campus is completed.

In closing, Mr. Jarvis opined the proposal before the Commission this evening has positive impact, and in his opinion an improvement over what exists today. Mr. Jarvis pointed out that, 1) there will be an increase in landscaping that will buffer the church expansion, and parking area from West 69th Street; 2) parking area will no longer be one large lot, it will be broken up with landscaped islands; 3) light wash will be reduced; 4) the church proposes no parking on West 69th Street, Brittany, Dunberry, West 70th Street, and the east side of the frontage road; 6) no house loss with the construction of two new houses, and lastly; 7) the commitment to building on the proposed new lots is a physical indicator the church does not want to move farther north.

Mr. Brown addressed the Commission, and informed them he does not believe the revised proposal is a compromise. Mr. Brown stressed a number of members of the Woodhill neighborhood object to development north of West 69th Street that causes the removal of residential houses. Mr. Brown pointed out two residential lots will be lost as a result of expansion of the sanctuary, and in his opinion there is no guarantee the proposed two new lots will be sold, and built on. Continuing, Mr. Brown, pointed out there is no mention of safety regarding the change is plan. Another concern is the height of the proposed new steeple, it is extreme. Mr. Brown said he wants the Commission to know he believes, along with many others in the neighborhood that Christ Presbyterian Church is an asset to the community, and provides many useful services to the community, but what is lacking by neighborhood standards is trust. In the past, we the neighbors of Woodhill have heard many promises, and many of them have been broken. Mr. Brown inquired why Commission never questioned Mr. Jarvis on the church's other option plans. Continuing, Mr. Brown pointed out the Commission has only seen what the church has put before you, which is the four previously submitted options, and now, option 5. You as a body, have not been privy to the other options. Mr. Brown asked the Commission what message they will send to Council. Mr. Brown commented if approved, in his opinion, a dangerous precedent is being sent to the Council for a vote. Concluding, Mr. Brown stated this has been a very difficult, exhausting time for him. He said he is embarrassed and ashamed of the way those in opposition to the expansion of Christ Presbyterian Church have been treated. A huge rift now exists in our neighborhood that was not there before, and is unnecessary. Mr. Brown concluded it has been very difficult to oppose this expansion. The association has tried to keep the focus on land-use, but it appears we have not accomplished that goal.

Chair Johnson asked for questions, or comments from the Commission. At this time there were none.

Chair Johnson opened the hearing to the public.

Mr. Hamilton, 4805 West 70th Street stated he is opposed to the plan as presented, and this is the first time he has spoken before the Commission. Continuing, Mr. Hamilton explained he lives on the south side of West 70th Street (one of the four homes), and if the entrance/exit for the church on 70th is allowed to be moved farther east, his property will be negatively impacted. He pointed out not only will it be difficult to exit/enter his and others driveways, but because of the grade of the church property at this point during evening hours car lights will shine into the four homes as vehicles exit the site. Mr. Hamilton stated another concern of his is re-sale of his home. He pointed out that presently it is difficult getting into, and out of driveways for the four homes directly across from the church, and west of Arneson Acres, but the difficulty will increase with the proposed expansion and eastward movement of the driveway. This could prevent potential home-buyers with children from purchasing any of these homes. Concluding, Mr. Hamilton said it is already difficult to market these homes.

Mr. J. Stickney, 4812 Wilford Way, stated he moved to Edina in 1996, and is a member of CPC. He added his children are very active in CPC, and enjoy what it offers. He stated the proposed expansion has caused some disagreement in their household. He said his wife strongly supports the expansion, adding he wants to support option #5, but now has a concern. He pointed out at the last hearing he felt CPC was not planning on purchasing any more residential homes, and now they have purchased the Marty home, and he stated he believes they have spoken with the Kovacks. Their home abuts church property on Normandale Road. Mr. Stickney said he wants CPC to stop purchasing residential homes. He has a concern that in the future Wilford Way may be pushed through. Concluding, Mr. Stickney stated he is concerned.

Mr. Jarvis interjected he has no idea where Mr. Stickney got information that the church wants to purchase the Kovack home.

Mr. Kovack, 6817 Normandale Road, said the church did not offer to purchase his home, but members of the design team did meet at his home to discuss the proposal since it greatly impacts his property.

Mr. Fred Little, 4725 Dunberry Lane, asked members of the Commission why no one asked members of the design team if they could review the other option plans the church indicated they considered. Mr. Little said to the best of his knowledge the church indicated at one time there were eight plans, which they narrowed to four, and have now added a fifth. Mr. Little reiterated not one Commission member challenged the church. Continuing, Mr. Little said this issue transcends the church plan. Mr. Little said the church has become a magnet church, and not the community church it used to be. Mr. Little pointed out less than 10% of the membership of Christ Presbyterian Church live in the 55435 zip zone, and this zip zone is the most impacted because of the proposed expansion. Concluding Mr. Little asked the Commission to restore faith in government, and deny the application for a conditional use permit.

Mr. Bob Smead, 6709 Southcrest Drive, said he is not a member of CPC, and thanked the active members of the Woodhill Neighborhood Association for their hard, and difficult task in opposing the expansion of a church. Continuing, Mr. Smead said he believes option #5 gives back to the neighborhood, and if the church does what it indicates it will do, he can support the proposed expansion. Concluding, Mr. Smead emphasized he wants to see homes constructed on the two proposed new lots, and the church to stop purchasing residential homes.

Mr. Gary Thatcher, 6901 Southdale Road, said the church provides a fabric in the everyday life of many people that helps them grow spiritually, and in many other areas. He pointed out the church brings much to community. Concluding, Mr. Thatcher said he supports the church in their expansion plans.

Ms. Mitchell, 4809 West 66th Street, stated she is a member of CPC, and supports the expansion plans. Continuing, Ms. Mitchell said she believes option #5

addresses all concerns, such as parking, access, landscaping, etc. Ms. Mitchell pointed out 54% of the members of CPC live in Edina. Concluding Ms. Mitchell said if the church is allowed to freeze, and become stagnant, the community will suffer. The church needs to grow.

Ms. Vicki Dessinger, 4816 Wilford Way, stated she is not a member of CPC, and just purchased her home and was unaware of their plans for expansion. Ms. Dessinger said she does not support the proposal as presented. Ms. Dessinger said not only is the church relocating a street, it would appear construction of such a project would take many months. She pointed out this is something that has not been mentioned. The Woodhill neighborhood will have to live “under construction” for a long period of time. Ms. Dessinger said with all due respect she does not trust the church. She stated she has felt “talked down to”, and been treated badly for her opposition. She said the size of the parking lot is extreme, and she believes something creative could have been accomplished on the existing campus site without crossing West 69th Street. A ramp has been suggested, and there are other options out there. In Conclusion, Ms. Dessinger said the church has not given her any reason for her to trust them, pointing out they have already purchased another home since the last meeting.

Mr. Bill Hammer, 4709 Upper Terrace, said he does not understand where the feelings of animosity comes from. He added he is a member of the church. Mr. Hammer pointed out Edina is losing churches, and cannot afford to lose another one. Mr. Hammer noted traffic is terrible, it has been terrible on West 70th Street for years. Concluding Mr. Hammer asked the Commission to remember the majority of CPC members live in Edina.

A resident at 4509 Laguna Drive, and member of CPC believes the church is an asset to the community, and supports their plans for expansion.

Mr. Don Bark, 4807 West 70th Street said he has lived in the area for many years and is concerned with the removal of the older church owned house on West 70 Street. He stated that house has been there for years, even before the church, and should be preserved. Continuing, Mr. Bark said he will be impacted because of the proposed easterly movement of the curb cut which will place the driveway in front of his home. Mr. Bark said in conclusion if the Commission feels this must be approved, please don't allow the curb cut to be moved to the east. Mr. Bark also asked them to consider a ramp which has been suggested time and time again. He said he understands at present ramps are not allowed, but can't that be changed in this instance. A ramp will fit nicely with the topography of the site. Parking could also be located underground.

Mr. Dean Knutson, 6900 Creston, stated he supports the expansion. Mr. Knutson said this is not only a land-use issue, it is more complex than that. Mr. Knutson stated he is a member of the church. He acknowledged traffic is an issue, but he does not feel the expansion of the church will impact traffic to a large degree. Concluding, Mr. Knutson said CPC brings value to the community as a whole.

Ms. Peg Gallagher, 6812 Brittany Road, stated at the last hearing Mr. Jarvis said there will be no more purchasing of residential properties, and now we have been informed the church purchased the Marty home. Ms. Gallagher said she does not want the church to march up the hill. The neighbors have no assurance the continuing acquisitions will cease.

Ms. Penny Smith, 6600 West Shore Drive, said she is not a church member, and has received many mailings from the church regarding this issue. She added she has lived in the area for 27 years, and during the 27 years, neighbors usually have opposed what happens at the church. Ms. Smith stated her property values have increased in 27 years, and traffic has also increased, but not only because of church expansion. Ms. Smith stated many residents in the Woodhill neighborhood support the church, acknowledging this has been a difficult issue for all of us, on both sides. Ms. Smith concluded she does not oppose the plan for expansion.

Ms. Van Zommer, 5312 West 60th Street, said she is a member of Christ Presbyterian Church, and considers the proposed expansion as a land-use issue. She asked the Commission to note a church is a permitted conditional use in the R-1 district. Ms. Van Zommer stated during testimony she became concerned with the impact the proposed entrance/exit will have if moved to the east on the four homes directly across the street, but feels that issue can be resolved. Continuing, Ms. Van Zommer said she supports option #5, it is a good plan, and the best plan presented to date. Ms. Van Zommer pointed out there have been rumors Grace Church may leave Edina because there is no room to grow, and that is a real concern. She concluded cities need viable, healthy churches, and CPC adds a tremendous benefit to the community, and not only to those who worship there.

Mr. McPheters, 4920 Poppy Lane, said he is a member of CPC and is also a member of the Woodhill Neighborhood Association. He said he believes a church is an investment to the community, and supports the expansion.

Mr. Tim Murphy, #86 Woodland Circle, said he is an 8th grade youth minister at CPC, is a 12th grader at Breck School, and believes the proposed expansion is necessary, and good, from a youth perspective. Mr. Murphy explained CPC has an active, and growing youth group that meets in the evenings. The youth mission has been a great benefit to the youth of Edina. Mr. Murphy asked the Commission to note the majority of teens that are in the youth group are from Edina. Mr. Murphy asked for the support of the Commission in approving the expansion of both Phase I and II.

Ms. Wineberg, 6624 Brittany Road, told the Commission she loves her neighborhood, and does not want it to change, and she does not look forward to the future expansion proposal and construction time frame. She acknowledged the church does many good things, but so do most churches. Ms. Wineberg said the damage that will be done, will be done to this neighborhood. Ms. Wineberg said she believes it is good for the church to grow, but she added she believes there are other options

regardless of what the church says. She suggested a ramp, and challenged why not a ramp.

Mr. Castle, 6628 West Shore Drive, stated he is not a member of the church but views it as an asset to the community at large. He said this process has saddened him, it has torn neighbors apart. He stated he cannot understand the opposition. He pointed out a WalMart is not being constructed, a gun shop is not moving in. This is a church expansion, a city issue, and the whole city will benefit by the expansion of the church. Mr. Castle added he is very concerned with traffic, and the continued increase in traffic for those who use West 70th Street. He stressed this neighborhood needs some traffic relief from the city even if the city believes there is no problem, and 70th can handle the increase. Mr. Castle suggested more sidewalks. In conclusion Mr. Castle reiterated he supports the proposed expansion.

Mr. Kovack, 6812 Normandale Road, said he has attended all meetings here, and elsewhere, and is just too tired. He said West 69th Street needs to stay open. Mr. Kovack said the church has not been a good neighbor in maintaining their rental properties, and he suggested that the 3000 members participate in a spring cleanup, and cleanup the houses owned by the church.

Mr. Grable, 4817 Wilford Way, said in her opinion the revised plan is a great improvement. He is in full support of the expansion plans.

Ms. Shirley Rivert, 4913 Payton Court, said she does not believe there is a need for a larger sanctuary. She asked the Commission what guarantee the neighborhood has that the church will stop purchasing land, and stop marching up the hill if they continue to grow.

Ms. Susan Irene, 4817 Dunberry Lane, said over the past 20 years she has witnessed many good things, and some bad. She said there have been many broken promises from the church, the gate was never erected, those who attend the bible study continue to spill over onto residential streets, etc. Ms. Irene stated she moved to the neighborhood because she loved it, and liked the idea of having a church in the neighborhood, but she never wanted that church to take over her neighborhood.

Ms. Sandy Keane, 4813 Upper Terrace, explained she feels tired and weary, and her lovely neighborhood is missing its harmony. She pointed out, though many don't see it, that the Woodhill neighborhood continues to shrink as more traffic passes through it as a result of highway congestion, congestion on West 70th Street and France Avenue. She said her neighborhood is stressed. She appealed to the church to have more services so the congestion is disbursed. In conclusion, Ms. Keane said it has been very difficult to oppose this church. The focus has not been on land-use, it has been on the role of a church in a community.

Chair Johnson closed neighborhood comments and referred to the Commission for their questions, comments.

Commissioner Ingwalson asked Mr Larsen how practical it is to limit parking. He said his concern is for the neighbors. If parking is limited on their streets, where will their visitors park? Mr. Larsen said Traffic Safety has found parking limitation signs can be regulated in a fair manner, and enforced. Members of the neighborhood will need to work with the Traffic Safety Committee, to find a solution that works. Mr. Larsen said restrictive parking on the north side of West 70th Street should not create a problem in front of the church, along with no parking posted on the south side. Commissioner Ingwalson said in his experience people park where there is a door that is close, and in many instances that is the street. Mr. Larsen said the Traffic Safety Committee will need to balance the residential use with the church and their activities.

Commissioner McClelland suggested no parking Sunday am.

Commissioner Swenson asked Mr. Hoffman what his feeling is regarding the four houses on the south side of West 70th street, and the impact they will feel if the curb cut is moved farther east. Mr. Hoffman said he has not studied that aspect of the proposal, but feels in either location, traffic will still need to be controlled during Sunday church services. Commissioner Swenson questioned if lights from the vehicles could create a nuisance. Mr. Hoffman said he agrees with that point, there will be a negative impact to the four homes from vehicle lights exiting the site as a result of the proposed easterly movement of the curb cut.

Chairman Johnson suggested that the entrance/exit stay where it is. Mr. Hoffman commented that "maybe it should." Chairman Johnson asked Mr. Hoffman if the curb cut could be moved farther west to reduce impact. Mr. Hoffman said because of the intersection of the frontage road and West 70th Street, the curb cut cannot be any closer to the intersection than it is today.

Commissioner Byron stated he wants the curb cut on West 70th Street to stay where it is, and not move. Commissioner Workinger agreed, he said an easterly movement is not acceptable to him.

Commissioner Runyan questioned how far West 69th Street is proposed to be moved north. Mr. Jarvis said the street at the east end will move about 85 feet, and around 150 feet on the west.

Commissioner Runyan said in listening to all the comments presented this evening from both sides, he observed this has become a very emotional issue. Continuing, Commissioner Runyan said the role of city government is to listen to both parties, and act on what they feel is best for the neighborhood, and entire community. Commissioner Runyan said he feels option #5 is a good option, good compromise, and once the hardship of construction is over, and the church performs as it stated, the result may be better than what exists today. Commissioner Runyan added if the landscaping is increased as indicated, and two new homes are constructed, it will be an asset to the community in his opinion. Concluding, Commissioner Runyan stated in

order for this to work he does believe the church has to honor the “promises” presented this evening.

Mr. Steve Brown interjected for a number of Woodhill neighbors there is a line in the sand, and that line is West 69th Street.

Mr. Kovack interjected for the record, that he would like the Commission to know members of the church spoke with him and promised a berm on his side of the property line, and the planting of coniferous trees. Mr. Jarvis responded that will be done.

Commissioner McClelland stated she is upset the way the neighborhood has become divided regarding this proposal. Continuing, Commissioner McClelland reported she has received many letter from residents of the Woodhill neighborhood that do support the church, acknowledging the Commission has heard from many of them this evening. Commissioner McClelland pointed out Fire, Safety, Police, and City Staff indicated when they first reviewed the four presented options that 1 and 3 were best, and that is what the Commission would focus on. Now option #5 is supported by Fire, Safety, Police and Staff, and option #5 in her opinion makes good planning sense.

Commissioner Byron commented he has been part of, and heard testimony on this issue for the better part of seven plus hours, and has come to the conclusion that all points of view are understandable, and well founded. Commissioner Byron acknowledged this issue has created much conflict in the differing points of view. Commissioner Byron stated he has resided in the 55435 zip zone for 22 years, and it is extremely threatening to any homeowner, regardless of where they live when a large red and white sign is posted on your block, across from you, or in your neighborhood indicating “something will change”. Commissioner Byron stated he has been there, he understands, and appreciates those who are in that position now. Continuing, Commissioner Byron said he believes the leadership on both sides of this issue should be applauded, they have done their best. Commissioner Byron said this has been a difficult and searching decision for him, and said that much to his own amazement that he was moving to recommend Conditional Use Permit approval subject to: 1) Vacation of existing 69th Street right-of-way, and dedication of a new right-of-way as illustrated on the revised plan (option #5); 2) Developer’s Agreement to cover construction of the newly located West 69th street; 3) All necessary permits from Nine Mile Watershed District, and MNDOT; 4) Modification of new curb cuts per recommendation of the Director of Pubic Works; 5) 70th Street curb cut to remain as is, or be moved farther west at the discretion of the City Engineer.; 6) Subdivide and re-plat lots on West 69th Street; 7) No portion of the proposed Phase II building plan can commence until the re-platted lots are sold with restrictive covenants

Commissioner Bergman said this has been a very long and hard process for everyone, and her hope this evening was that the decision would have already been made, and agreed upon by both parties, so one side would not be upset with her decision when they left the building, but that was not the case. Continuing, Commissioner Bergman said for her it came down to the big picture, and she views this

expansion as “a healthy problem”. The Commission questioned aspects of the project at the first hearing, and the outcome from that hearing is a better project. She asked the audience to believe this hearing process was also difficult for the Commission, and every member thought long and hard to come to their own conclusion. Commissioner Bergman added she hopes the neighborhood association and the church can work together in the future, and mend all bad feelings. Commissioner Bergman acknowledged CPC has not been as good a neighbor as it should have been, and the church should clean up its property.

Commissioner Ingwalson interjected he agrees with Commissioner Bergmans comments. He added he drove by the church before the meeting this evening, drove down West 69th Street, and agrees the church should clean up their rental properties, and rebuild one fence he saw was down. Commissioner Ingwalson said it is time to “mend fences” and the church in regards to their properties should always “overdo”, not “underdo” which would be in the best interest of all parties.