

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 28, 2019 - 3:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor
City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard

PRESENT: DeJoy, Edgerton, Grill, Lindeke, Ochs, Rangel Morales, and Reveal
EXCUSED: Baker
STAFF: Tony Johnson, Samantha Langer, Allan Torstenson, and Peter Warner

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Edgerton.

Dayton Avenue Church Historic Use Variance - 19-016-207 - Historic use variance for a rental hall for weddings and receptions with shared parking with other uses on site, 217 Mackubin Street, NW corner at Dayton Avenue

Tony Johnson presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval with a condition for the historic use variance. He stated District 8 made no recommendation, and there were no letters in support, and 10 letters in opposition.

In response to Commissioner Edgerton, Mr. Johnson said that this would not be an allowed use without a historic use variance (HUV). The purpose of a HUV is to allow uses that otherwise wouldn't be allowed in historic designated structures.

In response to Commissioner Grill, Mr. Johnson said that the maximum occupancy if this were to remain a church would be 450 people. The proposed use as a banquet hall would only allow 350 people.

Matt Ditzler, 1601 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN, said he is speaking on the applicant's behalf. Mr. Ditzler explained that the Dayton Avenue Church has been there for over 100 years, and the congregation contacted him to list the property for sale because they can no longer maintain the building. Mr. Thabet put an offer in on the property that has been accepted. The future use of this property was important to the sellers. The uses Mr. Thabet is proposing are uses that have existed in the past. It is a building where they took care of children, hosted weddings and countless other gatherings. The owners were hoping that it would ideally be another faith group that would occupy it, but due to some unique features of the property it is not viable. It is a beautiful historic building, but it needs a large amount of money put into the outside of it. It is a building with no air conditioning, only two bathrooms, and no commercial kitchen. He said that it is a tough sale for another congregation. Having someone like Mr. Thabet, who wants to purchase and repurpose the space, while continuing some of the uses the congregation had in the past, is very desirable. Mr. Thabet has personally spoken to a lot of the neighbors about what will be occurring on the property and about parking. Due to the non-overlapping proposed uses of the property, it looks like they have the minimum parking requirement met. They will also be adding a parking space or two to the parking lot. They believe it will be a great repurposing of this space.

The applicant, Mohammad Thabet, 12425 53rd Street, Stillwater, MN, stated that they will have events on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Sunday events would be earlier, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday would be from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. It would be weekends only.

Darlinda Coe, Clerk of Session of Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, 498 Dayton Avenue, Saint Paul, MN, provided some history of the Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church. They have had a lot of activities in the church in addition to Sunday worship including weddings and funerals. There has always been a community involvement aspect to Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church that has encompassed a clinic, an adoption agency, as well as homes for narcotics and alcoholics anonymous meetings. It has been a difficult decision to have to close the church and shut down the congregation, but due to the shrinking size, there is an inability to be able to keep up with the structure. They are delighted that Mr. Thabet has stepped forward with this idea to repurpose the building. It is a beautiful structure and a great piece of the neighborhood. It is wonderful to think that it can be restored and go on with economic viability and still provide services to the neighborhood.

No one spoke in opposition. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Elizabeth Reveal moved approval with a condition of the historic use variance. Commissioner Anne DeJoy seconded the motion.

Commissioner Lindeke said that he supports this application and this is a suitable use for the church going forward given how difficult it has been in Saint Paul to reuse churches.

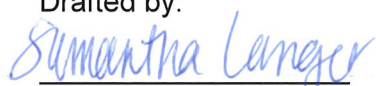
Commissioner Reveal suggested at some point an analysis of religious property reuse and options and guidelines should be done.

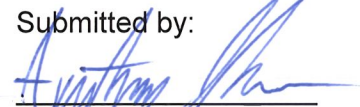
Commissioner DeJoy added it is always a challenge to find an adaptive reuse for these historic buildings. Parking is always an issue and she was impressed that they came into this with a shared parking agreement already in place.

Commissioner Edgerton stated he also would like to see an analysis on the reuse of historic properties.

The motion passed by a vote of 7-0-0.

Adopted Yeas - 7 Nays - 0 Abstained - 0

Drafted by:

Samantha Langer
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:

Tony Johnson
City Planner

Approved by:

Dan Edgerton
Chair