

CITY OF OSWEGO

PLANNING BOARD

November 4, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cory Moshier, Brit Hallenbeck, Kim McPherson, Jeffrey Hinderliter, and Chairman Freeman.

MEMBERS ABSENT: James Scanlon, Matthew Bacon, and Daniel Breitweg.

Chairman Freeman called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m., Wednesday November 4, 2020. Roll call was duly noted.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 2020 meeting was made by Brit Hallenbeck and seconded by Jeffrey Hinderliter; minutes unanimously approved.

Chairman Freeman made a motion that all actions taken tonight are excluded, exempt or Type II actions for the purpose of the State Environmental Quality Review Law unless otherwise stated. Motion seconded by Jeffrey Hinderliter, unanimous approval.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Advisory to the ZBA – Use Variance – 68 West Sixth Street, Case 20-132; to allow for a two-bedroom comfort care facility with staff offices, Section 280-90(B).

DISCUSSION: Kateri Spinella, board president and co-founder of Wellhouse Ministries, was present for the discussion. Ms. Spinella said Wellhouse Ministries was founded to help meet the needs of terminally ill people in our community. She said the application that was submitted is to convert St. Mary's convent, which is currently vacant, into a two bedroom comfort care home. She said comfort care refers to an essential part of care which includes a person's medical needs, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. She said Saint Mary's Convent, as it is right now, gives them a home-like environment in that this building consists of a full kitchen, dining room, living room, and chapel. She said Oswego County has no comfort care home. She said one of the primary reasons for having a comfort care home in our community is that people who want to be at home at end of life and are admitted into a hospice service need to have 24/7 care at home and unfortunately most families don't have that kind of support. She said what ends up happening is people attempt to provide that care at home but run the risk of caregiver burnout. She said if they were to be admitted into a nursing home in Oswego County there is a cost of \$350 per day unless they have Medicaid insurance, which is the only insurance that covers that cost. She said on top of everything the family is going through they can end up having a financial burden too. She said the closest comfort care home for residents of our community is in Syracuse at Francis House. She said people from Oswego can be admitted into Francis House if there is a bed available which unfortunately there seldom is. She said this would impose a travel and time burden on the family as well. She said by having Anthony House here in Oswego they can provide the trained staff to meet the needs for someone at the end of life without a cost to the family. Chairman Freeman said he can personally vouch for this because his late wife passed 14 years ago from cancer. He said they tried to get her into Francis House but there were no beds available. He said they had to hire private duty nurses around the clock to take care of her for the last two weeks of her life. He said this is an admirable project that they are developing here. Brit Hallenbeck said he has been on the Board for a while and re-developing and reusing former church properties has always been problematic and this seems like a very nice use that fits the community. Jeff McGann said for a use variance they have to show that there is not another use for that property that fits within that zone. He said he thinks out of all the use variances that they have seen this is probably the most fitting by far. He said in a TN1 you can basically have a single-family home and this is clearly never going to be a single-family home. He said a religious institution is allowed and he said it is clear that this is not going to go back to the purpose of a convent. He said with the tearing down of the school and the parking lot that exists on the north side of this building it is a little isolated from everything else. He said it has plenty of parking. He said there is certainly a need for it and there couldn't possibly be a better use for this building. He said if it doesn't get used for this it is going to sit there and decay. He said this started out at the Zoning Board where they took a vote and sent it to the Planning Board who in turn will vote to make a favorable decision to send it back to the Zoning Board. He said he doesn't think anyone here doesn't agree this is probably the most fitting use variance they have

ever seen. He said the administration is in favor of it. He said generally a use variance is a very difficult thing to prove but this one is black and white.

DECISION: Brit Hallenbeck made a motion for a favorable advisory to the Zoning Board for a Use Variance. Motion seconded by Cory Moshier, unanimous approval.

Brit Hallenbeck made a motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by Jeffrey Hinderliter, unanimous approval.

Approved: _____

Richard Freeman

Planning Board Chairperson

Jeff McGann

Planning Board Secretary