

Commission approves permit for Family Promise

Organization provides services for low-income and homeless families

By Nikki Brahm

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WAUKESHA — The Plan Commission on Tuesday approved a conditional use permit submitted by Family Promise of Waukesha County to use a building at 139 E. North St. as a resource center, subject to staff recommendations and with the requirement that it come back to the commission in nine months for a review to ensure it is meeting all conditions.

Any residential permit request or change of business plan must go back to the Plan Commission for approval and sump pump improvements are required.

Family Promise, which currently has a location in Wales, would use the Waukesha location to provide resources for low-income families and families experiencing homelessness. The building is located next to the city transit center parking structure.

According to city documents, Family Promise of Waukesha County provides case workers, workshops and other forms of support with the goal of keeping families in their homes. The group would have two fulltime employees and four part-time employees.

The hours of operation would be from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and Sunday and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday.

Parking for the building includes two parking spaces on site, the public parking ramp and the city lot behind the building.

The building is a historical landmark and changes to its exterior are limited. Family Promise has received Waukesha County Community Development Block Grant funds for their services.

The group may come back to the Plan Commission for a conditional use permit for residential services in the future.

Residents' concerns

About five area residents and business owners voiced concerns at the virtual Plan Commission meeting. Most

across the street from the river, where there is a fairly large homeless population," she said.

Kim Alexander, owner of Fox River Sports, said he had to call parking enforcement Tuesday morning and voiced his concerns on parking if the permit was granted.

Joe Nettesheim, director of Family Promise, said the business serves no more than four families at a time and he doesn't anticipate a lot of people in the center during the day. Families are sent to volunteer churches in the evenings for housing.

"Moving to the city of Waukesha is going to allow us to serve our families in a better way and the reason being — it gets them on public transportation," he said. "If you're in Wales and you don't have a car, it really limits the jobs you can get. Being in the city of Waukesha, families are not going to have to change their kids two or three times during the year for school districts."

Mayor Shawn Reilly responded to the concerns related to the homeless individuals in the neighborhood.

"I do understand that there's a subset of people downtown that are causing issues for many, many property owners," he said. "I live downtown ... basically my backyard butts up against the Hope Center. I do realize that certain issues can develop ... however, for this property, Family Promise only deals with families and I believe that those type of concerns as to having more people be the 'problem-type' of people for me is much, much less."

However, Reilly did voice concerns regarding families spending time at the center during the day.

The motion passed six to one with Ald. Peter Bartels dissenting. Commissioner Joan Francoeur encouraged Nettesheim to host a neighborhood meeting to address residents' concerns.

echoed concerns about parking and the presence of homeless individuals in the downtown area.

Terry Caporali, owner of Brook Street Beauty Bar, said there are evident homeless problems around the neighborhood that create safety concerns.

“I don’t feel like another organization that serves the homeless is needed,” she said. “We’re within a half mile of six of them already.”

Another resident, Paula Carabell, who said she lived in the condos behind the development, said she feels the area is also residential.

“We’re obviously concerned about our safety and our security and other people have spoken to the amount of police and emergency vehicle activity as a result of being adjacent to the bus station and



Family Promise of Waukesha County may move into a building at 139 E. North Street, using the location as a resource center for low-income or homeless families.

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