

New battle at an old site over proposed adult club

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Only three months after keeping a topless bar from moving into their neighborhood, northwest city residents are fighting again to keep another strip club from opening. And once again, the area's Catholic churches — Most Precious Blood, Holy Rosary, Sacred Heart and Holy Apostles — are leading the fight.

Last weekend, Oct. 31/Nov. 1, 265 parishioners at Most Precious Blood signed petitions after Masses that ask the City of Rochester's Planning Commission to deny C&A Playmates Inc. of Rochester, its application to open a facility at 1485 Mt. Read Blvd.

Bernadine Gordon, a petition drive leader and a parishioner at MPB, said she and her supporters are receiving support from Interfaith Action, a community-based advocacy group, in their fight. She added that the petition drive will continue the Nov. 7-8 weekend at the four area Catholic churches.

According to City Planner Renie Cutt, C&A wants to open a juice bar and cigar lounge featuring all-nude dancers; a lingerie and modeling room; and a video and novelty retail outlet at the site. The site, on the border of Greece and Rochester, was formerly home to a restaurant and is in a mixed industrial and residential area.

Area neighbors worked last summer to defeat the proposed opening of a strip club at the same site. The neighbors got their wish when on Aug. 5 the two men proposing the club withdrew their application.

Cutt said the city planning commission will hold a meeting in Rochester City

Council chambers on Monday, Nov. 9, at 6:30 p.m., to discuss whether to grant C&A a public hearing on its application. The public may attend the Nov. 9 meeting, she said, but not speak at it. Opponents and supporters of the proposed facility could speak at any subsequent hearings, she said.

Gordon said the neighbors will make sure their presence is felt on Nov. 9.

"We can't speak at the meeting, but we're going to try to get as many people as we can there," she said, to show the commission the strip club is not wanted.

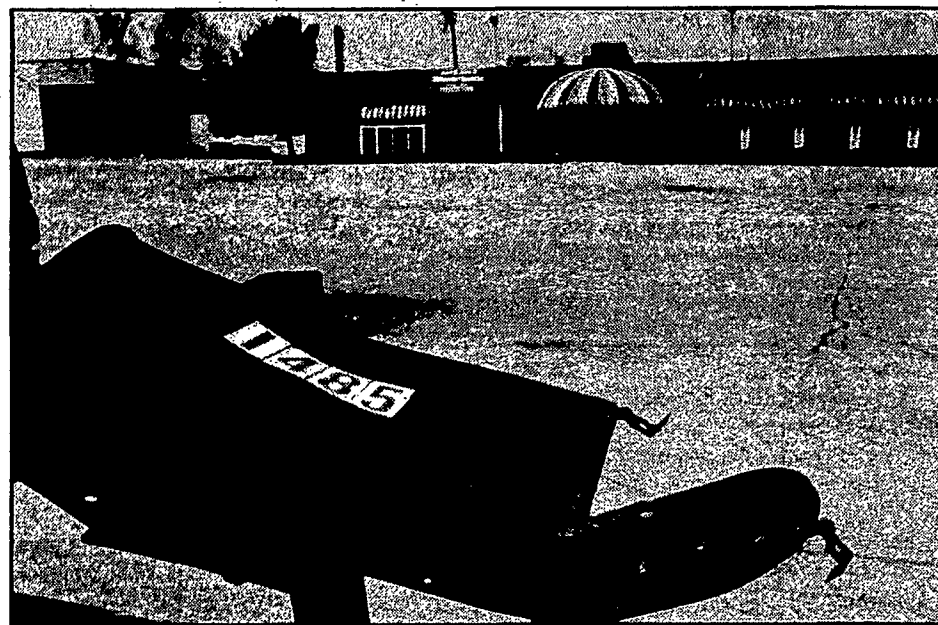
About 70 people attended an Oct. 27 public meeting at Most Precious Blood to discuss opposing the juice bar. Several public officials showed up, including Rochester City Councilman Robert J. Stevenson, a Democrat who represents the city's northwest area. Stevenson is also a parishioner at Sacred Heart.

Stevenson told the *Catholic Courier* the neighbors may have a more difficult time defeating the proposed juice bar than they did when they fought the topless bar. That's because the topless bar would have served alcohol and would have been subject to more governmental oversight, he said.

However, he noted that the neighbors last time pointed out to the commission the detrimental effects adult entertainment facilities have on their surrounding areas. Such an argument still holds water this time around, he commented, even if the place doesn't serve alcohol.

"I just don't see that anything like this can have a positive effect on your neighborhood," he said of the proposed juice bar. "If you think it's so positive, put it next to your house."

He added that area business owners



Greg Francis/Staff Photographer

The proposed site of a nude juice bar at 1485 Mt. Read Blvd., Rochester.

have written him and expressed near-unanimous opposition to the adult facility.

Gordon said the neighbors want a city-wide moratorium on adult entertainment facilities. Under current state zoning laws, however, Stevenson said such a moratorium is impossible. But, he added, Rochester plans to apply to the state legislature next year for an exemption that would allow it to zone out nearly all areas of the city from adult entertainment use. New York City, he said, obtained just such an exemption before it "cleaned up" Times Square.

State Sen. Richard A. Dollinger, a De-

mocrat who represents the area, told the *Courier* he has researched Greece zoning regulations that prohibit two adult entertainment businesses at the same site. A portion of the proposed strip club would be located in Greece, and Dollinger said he expects to learn soon whether the town's government will oppose it since it will feature three different businesses in one spot.

Whatever happens, Gordon said her supporters will continue to fight whoever they think threatens their neighborhood.

"We don't want to destroy this neighborhood," she said.

Geneva parishes will share co-pastorate, ministry staff

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

GENEVA — The parishes of St. Francis de Sales and St. Stephen's will mark their plan to become the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva with a celebration Nov. 8.

"Our Journey Together" is the theme for a 3 p.m. event beginning at St. Stephen's and ending at St. Francis. Children of the St. Francis de Sales/St. Stephen School will lead a 20-minute candlelight procession to St. Francis.

The parishes' Strategic Planning Committee has been working for more than a year to develop the plan, which calls for a co-pastorate but two distinct parishes — one of the more unusual plans among the diocese's Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium, according to William Pickett, diocesan pastoral planning director.

Yet, noted Committee Chairperson Tom Scherer, "To some parishioners it's still not real."

Father Paul Bonacci, parochial vicar of St. Stephen's, said that while people are beginning to use the term "Roman Catholic Community of Geneva," he added, "I think the reality of oneness will come with visible changes."

Perhaps the decreasing number of priests in the diocese is not hitting home yet, Father Ronald P. Harley, St. Francis' pastor, commented.

"One of the beauties of the plan is its long-term vision," Father Harley said. "By creating a co-pastorate with two priests working together, and providing everything needed in both parish communities, what is happening there is it is preparing people for the day there will be one priest."

"If you look at the figures it's obvious that two priests five years from now may well be a luxury," he added.

The diocese is asking that priests interested in the co-pastorate apply as a team after consulting with one another, according to Pickett. The plan suggests that one speak Spanish, to help meet needs of a growing Hispanic community.

The plan also calls for:

- Both priests to live in one rectory. One

or both current rectories may be office and meeting spaces for the Roman Catholic Community.

- One ministry staff to work with the pastors.
- One religious education center, at St. Francis, to serve both parishes.
- Five or six Masses a weekend.
- The convent at St. Stephen's to be evaluated. It has been used for pastoral and spiritual programs and could be another option for the priests' residence.

St. Francis already is in the process of closing its convent, and has been studying alternative uses for it.

None of Geneva's three parish priests has committed to the new co-pastorate.

Father Harley said he is discerning whether to apply.

"I've been here 11 years, and wherever I go will probably be my last assignment," he said, adding he turns 60 this month.

Father Bonacci, parochial vicar since June 30, said, "At this point I am praying and discerning."

And Msgr. Gerard Krieg, 70, who has served St. Stephen's for 15 years, will retire at the end of June.

"Though it is not one of my dying ambitions to retire," he said, "sometimes God speaks to us in necessities."

Whoever does wind up in the position can expect "a very high level of cooperation from the people," according to Father Harley. "There will be a few years of educating people," he added, "and helping them understand what real collaboration means before they begin to understand how it will enrich both parishes."

"If the committee working together is any indication, there's been total cooperation," Scherer, a member of St. Francis and a former member of St. Stephen's, added. Although some pastoral planning discussions were tense, he said, "We'd always walk away having done something for the betterment of both parishes."

Meanwhile, Msgr. Krieg was given a \$10,000 check at a dinner Oct. 31 that raised money toward his "wish list" for a new altar, organ and sanctuary floor.

"My conviction is to make a beautiful church that much more beautiful," he said.



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