

Proposed shelter draws opposition

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

For the second time in about a month, the Rochester City Planning Commission did not yield enough votes to approve a proposed site for Safe Haven, a Catholic Family Center residential care facility for homeless men. The shelter's proposed Webster Avenue location is fiercely opposed by many of its potential neighbors.

As it did at its last meeting in October, the commission voted 4-2 Nov. 4 in favor of approving the site. However, the shelter needs five votes for approval. CFC has one more chance of getting the site approved at the commission's Dec. 9 meeting. One commission member recused himself from the vote, and another was absent from the Nov. 4 meeting.

If approved, Safe Haven would be located in a two-story building at 283 Webster Ave., and would serve as many as 19 homeless men. The facility would be supervised 24 hours a day, and would not be a drop-in shelter, according to Susan E. Bennett, director of CFC's homeless and housing services. Clients would be referred to Safe Haven by other social-service agencies and organizations, she said. Shelter residents would be subject to an early evening curfew, she added.

Although CFC will pursue another vote, the agency is also willing to work with opponents of the proposed site to find an alternate location, according to Bennett.

Neighbors around the proposed site have mounted a massive effort to stop the shelter from being established. More than 30 neighbors showed up for the Nov. 4 meeting, carrying signs emblazoned with such phrases as "Keep our neighborhood residential (like your's)" and "Do Neighborhoods Matter?"

Neighbors oppose locating Safe Haven in their neighborhood for several reasons. A school is located not far from the site, they noted. Meanwhile, hundreds of neighbors lobbied the city and recently won approval to have their area zoned for single-family dwellings. Hence, the neighbors said Safe Haven would undermine their attempt to attract new home owners.

"We will certainly work to see that the needs of the homeless are met, but just not on Webster Avenue," said Kyle Crandall, president of the Beechwood Neighbor-

hood Coalition.

Following the Nov. 4 meeting, Crandall urged his neighbors to write letters to the local daily newspaper about the issue and contact city council members to ask them "why they appoint these clowns to the planning commission." He said he was frustrated with the commission because neighbors are opposed to the site.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Bennett noted that CFC has looked at numerous sites for Safe Haven that officials found were not suitable. She said that she believes the Webster Avenue neighbors have unwarranted fears of the homeless. She added that studies have shown that well-run shelters don't depreciate property values.

Bennett said a men's shelter must meet several criteria, including location on a major busline; a backyard so the men would not be loitering on the street; off-street parking; and a building laid out in a manner that allows the men to be supervised effectively.

"We can't be within a quarter-mile of another shelter," she said. "That rules out a ton of sites."

A contentious discussion took place between Bennett and the neighbors after the Nov. 4 vote.

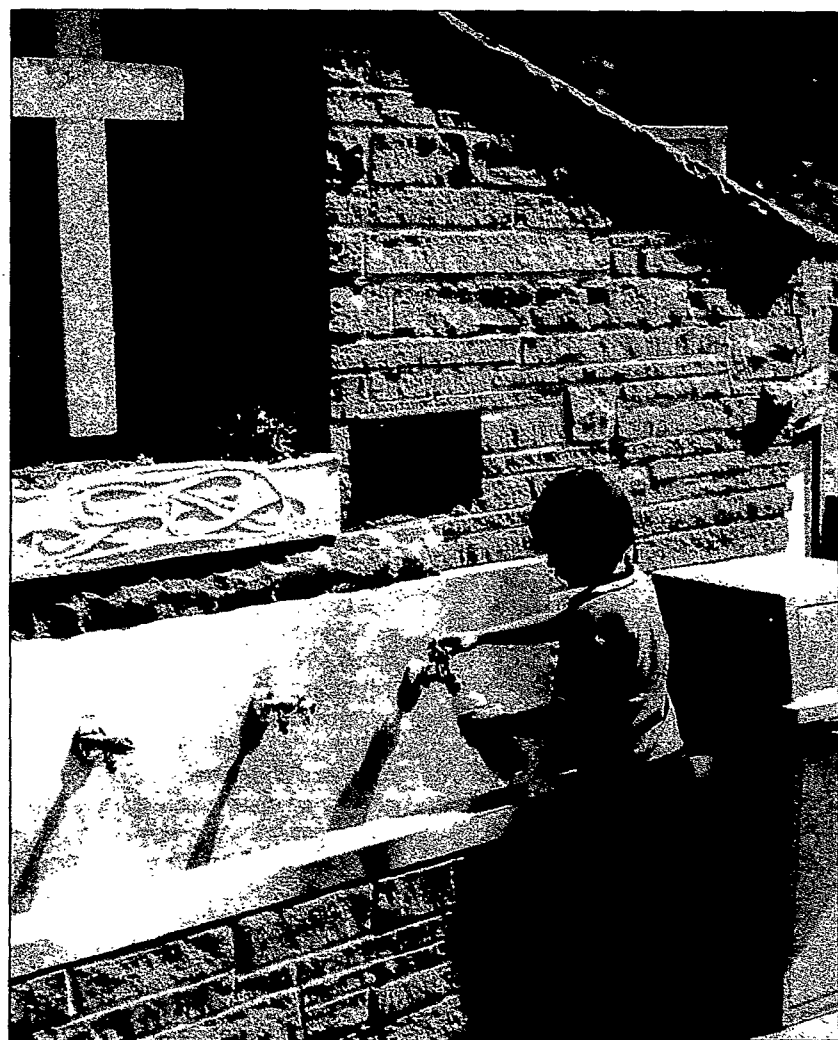
"I work with (homeless) men every day," Bennett told the neighbors. "There's no way CFC would put these men in your neighborhood if they thought they were dangerous."

Linda Hagarty, one of the neighbors, told Bennett she understood her passion for helping the homeless: However, Hagarty said she believed Bennett was not hearing what the neighbors were saying.

"You are not involved in the neighborhood," Hagarty said. "I don't think that this is a place that belongs in the neighborhood."

The discussion ended with a glimmer of hope, however, when the neighbors offered to work with CFC on finding an alternate site. Bennett said she would meet with leaders of the neighborhood coalition on Nov. 7. Crandall said he would arrange to have Bennett meet Rochester-area real estate agents who may be able to help her find a different site for Safe Haven.

"I'm not at all opposed to a different site if I could do the quality (of service) I was going to do on Webster Ave.," Bennett told the neighbors.



Joanne Asher/CNS

Healing stream?

Ten-year-old Luke Aragon of Pueblo, Colo., collects water from a spigot fed by a natural stream at the Mother Cabrini Shrine near Golden, Colo. Some people believe the water has healing qualities, but the shrine's administrator points out, "It's the people who have proclaimed it healing and miraculous, not the church."

Woman to sue doctor

TRENTON, N.J. (CNS) — A woman who said she was told her first-trimester abortion did not end a human life can sue her doctor for severe emotional distress, a New Jersey appeals court ruled Oct. 29.

The ruling reversed a previous court's dismissal of Rosa Acuna's claims that her physician committed medical malpractice in 1996 for failing to tell her she was aborting a human life.

According to court documents, Acuna was advised by her physician, Dr. Sheldon Turkish, to have an abortion when she was seven weeks pregnant, because the pregnancy was causing damage to her kidneys.

When Acuna, then a 29-year-old mother of two, asked her physician if human life had already formed in her pregnancy, she claims he told

her, "Don't be stupid; it's only blood."

During the hearing, Turkish testified that he did not remember being asked that question, but acknowledged that if a patient had asked, he would have answered that a "seven-week pregnancy is not a living human being."

Acuna signed a consent form, but she now says it was not informed consent, which is required by New Jersey law before an abortion.

Acuna's attorney, Harold Cassidy, told Catholic News Service that the trial, scheduled for May, needs to prove that the doctor failed to provide his patient with all information about the abortion procedure.

He noted that even if a jury rules in favor of Acuna the case wouldn't specifically challenge the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision.