

Rochester denies shelter approval

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Safe Haven, a proposed Catholic Family Center shelter, will probably find no safe haven at its proposed location on Webster Avenue in Rochester.

Kyle Crandall, a leader of neighbors opposed to the shelter's proposed location, researched Rochester City Planning Commission rules and found that if the commission fails two times to garner enough votes to approve an application, the application is denied. The commission voted 4-2 this month and in October to approve the application, which needs a super-majority of five votes to pass (a member was absent at both meetings). CFC had planned to submit its application one more time in December, but will consult with its lawyers before making any new moves in light of this information, according to Susan Bennett, CFC's director of homeless and housing services.

Crandall conferred with Linda Kingsley, the city's corporation counsel, before announcing the city's ruling on Nov. 7 during a meeting of the Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition at St. Mark's and St. John's Episcopal Church on Culver Road. A Beechwood official noted that the application probably would have passed in December,

and the neighbors in attendance cheered the announcement that it had been denied.

"I hope that the planning commission will see that grassroots organizations are important to the city," Crandall said in an interview. "I think we were pleased that when the rule was pointed out (to the city), it was upheld."

Under extraordinary circumstances, the planning commission chairman could waive the two-votes rule that led to the denial, but Kingsley noted that that was highly unlikely to happen. CFC could also try filing a new application after Jan. 1, she added. However, zoning law changes slated to go into effect then would bar a shelter from the area, she said.

Safe Haven would have been located in a two-story building at 283 Webster Ave., and would have served as many as 19 homeless men. Neighbors opposed locating Safe Haven in their neighborhood because there is a school not far from the site, and they expressed concern about having a shelter near school children. Meanwhile, the neighbors recently won approval to have their area zoned for single-family dwellings. Hence, the neighbors said, they believe Safe Haven would diminish their attempt to revitalize their neighborhood and attract new home owners.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Veterans Day celebration

Danny Hurley (center) gets a laugh from third-grade classmates Ben McFadden (from left), Elizabeth Thomas, Stephen Denninger and Mackenzie Brown by donning a helmet during a Nov. 8 Veterans Day celebration at St. John of Rochester School in Fairport. The students and their teacher, Betsy Place, were honored by the Genesee Valley Detachment, Marine Corps League because of their interest in and kindness toward veterans.

Bennett has noted that CFC has looked at numerous sites for Safe Haven that officials found unsuitable. She believes the Webster Avenue neighbors have undue fears of the homeless, and added that studies have shown well-run shelters don't depreciate property values.

Crandall and Bennett have both pledged to work together to find alternate sites for Safe Haven. At the coalition meeting, Bennett gave

Crandall a list of criteria that are necessary for a site to be considered for a shelter. Crandall said he would distribute the list to real estate agents at the meeting who might be able to help CFC find a new site. Nonetheless, Bennett noted that the Webster Avenue site had been ideal for Safe Haven.

"We've searched all over the city," she said. "We believe it's the best site."

Norms' inclusion of men religious 'a surprise'

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In the revised clergy sexual abuse norms to be debated and voted on by the U.S. bishops this week, a new clause applying the norms to religious priests and deacons is raising questions.

"It was a surprise to us," said Marist Father Ted Keating, executive director of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. "We're having it looked over by canonists and specialists." The CMSM is the national organization of more than 250 provincial or national leaders of male religious orders.

"I think the explicit inclusion of religious changes the Dallas action (the version of the norms approved by the bishops at their June meeting in Dallas)," said Mercy Sister Sharon Euart, a canon lawyer and former associate general secretary

of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Just what it means practically is not yet clear."

The revised norms were worked out by a joint Vatican-U.S. bishops commission Oct. 29-30 and released Nov. 4. The bishops were to vote on during their Nov. 11-14 meeting in Washington.

The revised version has a new footnote that says, "In applying these norms to religious priests and deacons, the term 'religious ordinary' shall be substituted for the term 'bishop/eparch,' mutatis mutandis (making the necessary changes)."

The footnote is attached to a sentence in the preamble to the norms. The original sentence in the preamble said the norms will govern diocesan policies "dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons or other church personnel." The revised version

drops "or other church personnel" and inserts "diocesan and religious" before "priests or deacons."

Sister Euart said under church law the bishops do not have the authority to enact proper law for religious orders.

Therefore, she said, when the norms are approved and promulgated, they will technically have the force of law only for U.S. dioceses and eparchies — the term used for dioceses in the Eastern Catholic churches — and not for the religious orders in the United States.

Father Keating said, "For many, many years we have been collaborating with the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse. When they met in the spring, it seemed clear that the bishops did not intend for us to be covered under the norms (but) that we would cooperate — and there's even a provision

in the charter ('Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People' adopted by the bishops in Dallas) itself that says our leadership will meet with the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse."

He added that when the CMSM met in August "we decided we would honor the charter and norms, awaiting the final norms, and then would implement them in the religious institutes. We said we would remove our men (who had sexually abused a minor) from ministry and we would keep them and supervise them afterwards — and that's where it's been until now."

"Now we have this surprise on our desk," he added. "Where do we go now? Do we go back to ground zero and presume now that we're somehow part of the norms? ... We're looking for ways to canonically interpret it and then respond in dialogue with the bishops."