

MINUTES OF MEETING
INDIAN HILL PLANNING COMMISSION

JUNE 16, 2009

The regular meeting of the Indian Hill Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, June 16, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fire Department's Training room at 6475 Drake Road.

Members Present: Jane G. Koppenhoefer
David T. Ottenjohn
Abbot A. Thayer

Members Absent: Paul F. Madden
Richard C. Wiggers

Officials Present: Michael W. Burns, City Manager
David M. Couch, Assistant City Manager

Visitors Present: John Zaring, Armstrong Chapel
Bill Mitchell, Armstrong Chapel
Ben Richards, Champlin/Haupt Architects, Inc.
Carol Tuthill, 5475 William Henry Harrison Lane
Thomas Tepe, Jr., Keating Muething & Klekamp PLL
Hugh Brandt, 6550 Shawnee Ridge Lane
Chip Nielsen, 7275 Cayuga Drive
John Gross, 4900 Councilrock Lane
Galen Mills, 7600 Brill Road
Joe & Louise Rhodenbaugh, 8155 Indian Hill Road
Greg Stover, 6520 Madeira Hills Drive
Jim Beck, 8459 Wetherfield Lane
Nathan Custer, 6618 Hialea Court
Deb & Tuck Krehbiel, 8225 Brill Road
Rick & Elizabeth Bieser, 5150 Drake Road
James Gould, 5250 Drake Road
Mark Kuenning, 8035 Remington Road
Steve & Jill Smith, 5420 Drake Road
Andy Webster, 5535 Miami Road
Paula Watters, 8340 Indian Hill Road

In the absence of Chairman Madden, Mrs. Koppenhoefer called the meeting to order and asked for comments or corrections to the March 17, 2009 Planning Commission minutes. There being none, Mr. Thayer made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Ottenjohn seconded, and the minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Mrs. Koppenhoefer asks for anyone planning to speak on behalf of this case, to please stand, raise their right hand, and be sworn in prior to speaking.

Item Number 1: The Armstrong Chapel United Methodist Church located at 5125 Drake Road is requesting special exception approval to construct a building addition with improvements to the existing church. The Armstrong Church operates as an approved special exception under the continuing jurisdiction of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Greg Stover, Senior Pastor of Armstrong Chapel United Methodist Church comes before the Commission and states that after his presentation, Mr. Ben Richards, of Champlin/Haupt Architects, Inc., will explain the details of the project. Leaders of the church, Mr. Galen Mills, Mr. Mark Kuenning, and Mr. Joe Rhodenbaugh will also be available to answer any questions.

Mr. Stover begins by providing background information and rationale for the building project. Mr. Stover states that the leaders of the church believe very strongly that this building plan is critical and essential to maintain the church as a place of worship that responds to the needs and desires of its members, both present and future.

Mr. Stover comments that the proposed plan provides an attractive addition that is functional, compliments the architecture of the current church, blends with the many styles of architecture in the neighborhood, and will reflect the high quality of the homes in Indian Hill.

Armstrong Chapel's roots in Indian Hill reach back to 1798 when the first Methodist society began to meet in homes and barns. In 1831 the old chapel was completed and provided a needed worship space and place of burial for residents of the community. Responding to the growing worship needs of the church and the community, the present sanctuary was added in the late 1950's and the current education facility in the mid 1960's.

Fifty years ago, members worshiped in one service with one style of worship. Today, members worship in four services, each with their unique needs. The traditional services in the old chapel and sanctuary remain strong, but currently about a third of the church's weekend member's worship in a Contemporary Service. Many of these people would not have come to Armstrong Chapel and/or would not remain if the church is not able to meet their needs for Contemporary Worship in a satisfactory way.

The current sanctuary does not provide the needed space for the Contemporary Worship service. The proposed plan will provide that space.

For many years the youth group has been packed into inadequate space. The lower level of the Contemporary Worship area will provide the space they need without increasing the footprint of the church.

The additions that are being presented are critically related to positioning the Armstrong Chapel for future viability as a church for all ages. For long established churches like Armstrong Chapel, the ability to adapt to changing times is absolutely critical. Without that ability, it places the church in a detrimental position.

The primary priority of the congregation is not to create dramatic or rapid growth, but to position the church to maintain the current strength of membership as the membership ages more rapidly. The congregation would like to allow for modest and stable growth over time.

Mr. Stover comments that the church's planned expansion meets the twelve criteria for a special exception and adds value to the community. The plan includes an updated water and sewer retention system, new lighting that will minimize light pollution, and a geothermal HVAC system that will make the church and Indian Hill more "green".

Armstrong Chapel is the home to a Boy Scout troop and a Cub Scout pack for families in the community. For sixteen years the church has hosted the student led baccalaureate service for Indian Hill High School students. The church is a polling place, a Red Cross crises center, and a place that provides space for community events and benefits.

Mr. Stover notes that the church does want to be a good neighbor. They first communicated with neighbors in late 2007, early in the planning process to let them know what was planned. There have been several meetings with neighbors since then to try to alleviate any concerns.

The congregation has already financially invested significantly with commitments and offerings toward this project. The critical path schedule involves breaking ground in late August to allow the church to take advantage of the current positive construction market and low interest rates in order to control costs and move forward more efficiently.

Mr. Stover turns the presentation over to Mr. Ben Richards of Champlin/Haupt Architects, Inc. Mr. Richards displays the plans for the addition before the Commission, and comments that this is the first major addition that has been proposed for this building in the past fifty-eight years.

Mr. Richards explains that there has been a conscious effort to minimize the footprint as much as possible, which has resulted in 7200 square feet of program space being at basement level below the sanctuary. This area will be used for youth groups.

The addition will tie in aesthetically to the Georgian architecture that currently exists, and the brick and roofing will match as well.

Mr. Richards presents a landscape plan that he feels enhances the architecture of the building and screens the building from neighboring properties. The plan includes several areas of deciduous and non-deciduous trees and plantings.

The new addition will replace a portion of the parking lot and/or impervious surface, therefore not changing the existing lot coverage. An underground detention will be added that will not be visible. The existing off-site discharge system will be replaced with a new on-site septic system.

The new photometric plan calls for replacement of existing lighting fixtures with new light sources that direct light downward and reduce spillage to other properties. These new fixtures demonstrate 0.00 foot candle levels at the property line.

In summary, Mr. Richards states that the overall function of Armstrong Chapel is not changing. There are no changes in the use of the building with the proposed plan. The spaces and function are being improved and enhanced, but there is no intent for weekly and daily operations of the church to change. The addition will meet or exceed all current codes and regulations.

Staff Report: Mr. Couch states that the Armstrong Chapel United Methodist Church is located at 5125 Drake Road. The request before the Commission is for approval to construct an addition to the existing church along with several site improvements.

From a zoning prospective, the Armstrong Chapel United Methodist Church operates under the continuing jurisdiction of the Planning Commission as a special exception. **Section 10. 101.41 – Authority and Purpose** authorizes the Commission, in accordance with the procedures and standards to grant special exceptions to the district regulations of this ordinance. The special exception request is authorized and identified under **101.421 Special Exceptions Authorized (2) Places of Worship.**

Mr. Couch notes that the Village's records of the church date back to 1825 with the original church being located at the southeast corner of Drake and Indian Hill Roads. The church also owns the parcel located at the northeast corner of Drake Road and Indian Hill Road where the Jefferson School is located.

The current church was constructed in 1958 after approval by the Planning Commission. Mr. Couch states that previously there were two Planning Commission meetings in 1956 involving Armstrong Church. On February 21, 1956 the Indian Hill Planning Commission denied a variance request by the church to approve the current building site with a net acreage of 4.95 acres.

On April 17, 1956, the Planning Commission approved a variance request by Armstrong Church permitting the 4.95 acre parcel to be the building site of the current church. The

approval came with the understanding that every effort would be made to add the necessary land to bring the new area to five acres.

Mr. Couch notes that in 1961 the zoning ordinance was amended by Council, increasing the lot area from a minimum of 5 acres to 10 acres for "Places of Worship, Schools, & Places of Assembly".

The property is located in District "B" – three acres and consists of two parcels with a gross lot area of 5.92 acres and a net lot area of 5.03 acres. The property is a corner lot with frontage on Drake Road, Indian Hill Road, and Brill Road.

The proposed addition's exterior façade will be in keeping with the traditional Georgian architecture, and the brick masonry will match the existing facility.

The footprint of the addition totals 13,800 square feet and includes a lower level, ground level, and upper level. The main entrance to the proposed addition is oriented to the north lot line and includes a vestibule. The height of the structure is approximately 27'. The footprint of the proposed addition extends approximately 85' north beyond the existing building line and extends 8' further east than the existing building line. There is also a courtyard located between the existing church and the proposed addition that is approximately 4,350 square feet.

The lower level will be used for the student ministry and includes classrooms, bathrooms, storage area, a mechanical room, and an elevator that extends to the second level.

Level one features a 265 seat auditorium, a vestibule to be used as the main entry, a large gathering area and lobby, bathrooms, mechanical room, storage room, and elevator. Level two is where a mezzanine will connect to the existing narthex of the church.

Mr. Couch reviews the proposed changes and improvements to the site plan as follows:

- Demolition – Approximately 14,300 square feet of space that is primarily parking lot, resulting in the loss of seventeen parking spaces.
- Lot Coverage – The existing lot coverage is 54%. The proposed addition will not change the lot coverage of 54% due to demolition and the loss of parking lot area or impervious surface.
- Septic – A new septic system will be installed at the west side of the building, replacing the existing off lot discharge system. The new state and county guidelines require on-site discharge systems, which will eliminate any surface water from the system leaving the property.

- Storm Water Report – The engineers have prepared a storm water report that indicates underground detention is most suited for the site and area runoff. The underground design calls for 200 lineal feet of 36' corrugated metal pipe which will outlet when needed at the northeast corner of the property. The proposed storm water design meets all Hamilton County storm water regulations and requirements.
- Lighting – The proposed exterior lighting and photometric plan greatly reduces light source and spill over to other properties. The existing lighting will be replaced with full cut-off fixtures that provide 0.0 foot candle levels at the property lines. The density of lighting will not increase from what was originally there, and the new lighting will provide a great improvement as it relates to light source and pollution.
- Landscape Plan – The landscape plan reveals several areas of plantings which include deciduous and non-deciduous trees and plants.
- Building Compliance – All improvements will meet the Hamilton County Building Codes which also include a new automatic fire suppression system.

The proposed special exception must meet the twelve standards that are outlined in **Section 10. 101.431 Standards** – The Commission shall not grant a special exception unless, in each case, it makes written findings of fact and conclusions, directly based on and supported by the particular evidence presented to it in the application and at the hearing.

Mr. Couch reviews these twelve standards as follows:

- 1.) The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the special exception will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, convenience, comfort, morals, or general welfare:

Staff finds that the proposed addition will not be detrimental or endanger the public health, safety, convenience, comfort, morals, or general welfare, but will improve the church services and facilities that now exist.

- 2.) The special exception is not inconsistent with the Village's adopted Land Use Objectives and Policies;

Staff finds that the special exception is not inconsistent with the Village's adopted Land Use Objectives and Policies. The special exception request meets the Land Use Objectives with regards to

Character, Policy 2, Physical Development and Site Design, Policy 6, and Community Services and Facilities, Policy 3.

- 3.) The special exception, either alone or in conjunction with other special exceptions previously granted or otherwise existing, will not injure, diminish, or impede the use, enjoyment, or normal and orderly development of other property in the immediate vicinity of the parcel proposed for development;

Staff finds that the request will improve and not diminish the use and enjoyment of surrounding properties by controlling storm water with underground detention and installing a new septic system that is categorized as an on-site discharge. The proposed lighting plan will improve light pollution and spillage onto other properties.

- 4.) The special exception is consistent with the residential character of the immediate vicinity of the parcel proposed for development;

Staff finds that the proposed addition meets the Indian Hill Zoning Ordinance and is consistent in size with other public structures within the immediate area.

- 5.) The special exception will not substantially diminish or impair property values within the neighborhood;

Staff is aware of the size of the proposed addition and that adjacent neighbors have concerns regarding impact on property values.

- 6.) Adequate utilities, drainage, wastewater treatment, and/or other facilities necessary to serve the proposed special exception already exist or will be provided;

Adequate utilities already exist at the location. However, the proposed underground storm water detention design and new septic upgrade will provide a positive impact that will be a benefit to the immediate area.

- 7.) Adequate access roads, entrance and exit drives, and off-street parking spaces already exist or will be provided and designed so as to prevent traffic safety hazards, to minimize traffic conflicts and congestion in the streets, and to maintain the rural residential character of existing roadways in the Village, without requiring improvements that will increase the capacity of existing roadways or will encourage their use by through-traffic;

Staff finds that there will be no change in the existing entrances and exit drives. The existing parking lot has been reduced from 267 parking spaces to 250 spaces. The special exception will not increase traffic or create a traffic conflict.

- 8.) The special exception will not adversely affect a known archaeological, historical, or cultural resource;

There are no known archaeological, historical, or cultural resources.

- 9.) The applicant has represented to the Commission that it has the capacity to complete, maintain, and operate the special exception as proposed and approved, and has made or will make adequate legal provision to guarantee the provision and development of any buffers, landscaping, public open space, and other improvements associated with the proposed development;

Staff finds that the applicant has the capacity to complete, maintain, and operate the special exception as approved. The Armstrong Church has a long history of maintaining a high quality facility. Adequate buffers and landscaping are included with the request.

- 10.) The special exception shall in all other respects conform to the applicable regulations of the zoning district in which the property is located, except where the Planning Commission in a particular case grants a variance from the regulations pursuant to **Section 101.5** or, if the regulations are of a type that may not be varied under **Section 101.52**, where the Council in a particular case waives or modifies the regulations pursuant to the recommendations of the Commission;

The special exception conforms in all other respects to the applicable regulations of the zoning ordinance in which the property is located.

- 11.) All exterior lighting fixtures will be designed, directed, or shaded so that no direct light is cast upon any other property; and all driveways and off-street parking areas will be designed and screened to minimize the illumination of adjacent residential properties by automobile headlamps.

There is no increase in exterior lighting and the proposed lighting fixtures are full cut-off that hides the lighting source. The photometric plan of the site shows 0.0 foot candle levels at the property boundary lines preventing light spillage beyond the property.

- 12.) All buildings and structures located within 25 feet of the minimum front yard, side yard, or rear yard required under **Section 63.1** or **73.1** will be screened by landscaping of a type, nature, and seasonal character that will ensure the privacy of adjacent dwellings and will ensure that the visual character of the use will be compatible with surrounding uses; and all accessory outdoor storage areas, mechanical equipment, and waste disposal facilities will be screened from the view of adjacent dwellings.

Staff finds that the Armstrong Chapel intends to maintain the existing character of the land and have included a landscape plan to compliment the addition.

Staff recognizes that the size of the proposed addition has caused some concerns from neighbors, Staff, and members. Therefore, Staff felt it was important to compare the footprint and lot coverage percent of other approved special exceptions within the immediate area. Mr. Couch reviews the following four sites:

- Indian Hill Church – Approximate footprint of the church is 15,000 square feet, 10.7 acres, & 32% lot coverage.
- Ranger/Administration Building – Approximate footprint of the building is 25,000 square feet, 4.2 acres, & 35% lot coverage.
- Indian Hill Elementary School – Approximate footprint of the building is 80,000 square feet, 20 acres, & 67% lot coverage.
- Indian Hill Primary School – Approximate footprint of the building is 55,000 square feet, 10 acres, & 37% lot coverage.

Mr. Couch notes that lot coverage totals include all impervious surfaces (driveways, parking lots, and hard surfaces).

Staff finds that the proposed addition complies with the Indian Hill Zoning Ordinance setbacks and special exception standards. However, there is opposition from the neighbors regarding the proposed special exception request.

When Staff last met with the affected parties, Staff requested that the church meet with the neighbors and address their concerns.

Mr. Ottenjohn expresses concern over the plan to double the size of the building, but reduce parking.

Mr. Galen Mills, Chair of the Building & Facilities Committee for Armstrong Chapel, explains that they have studied the parking needs during typical Sundays as well as on

Easter Sunday. There has not been any overflow of parking during these services. The new structures are only intended to support the current members in the setting that they have asked the committee to create. However, potentially membership may grow in the future. Currently, on average, the church only uses approximately 60% of its parking area.

Mrs. Koppenhoefer asks how many people the current sanctuary accommodates. Mr. Stover replies approximately five hundred twenty five.

Mr. Couch submits pictures to the Commission of the parking lot from both services that were held on the previous Sunday taken by the Indian Hill Rangers. These photographs indicate that the parking lot was about half full.

Mr. Ottenjohn asks what the plan would be if the church is extremely successful with the new facility, greatly increasing membership, and the need for additional parking.

Mr. Mills states that it is not planned, but there is room for approximately fifty more parking spaces on the property.

Mr. Ottenjohn asks Mr. Richards if there is any possibility of making the addition smaller.

Mr. Richards responds that several options were explored. However, many of the options greatly impacted the Georgian architecture that they are trying to maintain with the addition. The required setbacks also limit the opportunity for placement of the building.

Mr. Richards notes that it was mentioned that the lot coverage for the property is 54%. However, the building itself is under 13% of that amount.

Mr. Thomas Tepe, Jr., with Keating Muething & Klekamp PLL, comes before the Commission to represent Mr. James Gould, residing at 5250 Drake Road. Mr. Tepe explains that Mr. Gould recognizes that change is good, and he is not opposed to the church expanding. However, the proposed addition is just too large.

Mr. Tepe refers to two recent articles from the Community Press that he printed off from the internet indicating that the plans for the church were not final. Mr. Gould was under the understanding that the plans he was shown were the final plans for the addition. Mr. Tepe requests sixty days for the neighbors and Armstrong Chapel members to have time to review the "final plans" and come to some type of agreement on a less intrusive structure.

Mr. Tepe refers to this project as being Phase 1. He states that he has seen plans that have a gymnasium, locker room, etc., and he would like to know if that is included in a Phase II, and if there is a Phase III.

Mr. Tepe states that the proposed addition will be detrimental to the comfort and the general welfare of surrounding neighbors due to its size. He expresses that it will also negatively affect property values in the area.

Mr. Tepe feels that this addition is not consistent with the residential character of the immediate vicinity; therefore, not meeting standard #4. He also feels that there are other standards that are in question of being met in order to approve this request.

Mr. Gould expresses his intent to try to work with the church to come to some type of compromise that all parties can live with in a respectful manner. He is requesting thirty days to work with the church to resolve some of the issues at hand. Mr. Gould states that he will give his time, money, and energy to try to find some type of solution.

Mr. Tuck Krehbiel, of 8225 Brill Road, comments that he feels that the church has been a good neighbor. However, he does feel that this addition is too large for this location.

Ms. Paula Watters, residing at 8340 Indian Hill Road, states that she has concerns regarding additional traffic, the size of the proposed addition, and the negative impact she feels this plan would have on her property value.

Mrs. Jill Smith, of 5420 Drake Road, comes before the Commission as a member of the church. Mrs. Smith feels that, with the aging congregation, the church needs to attract more young members, and that this addition is an important part of keeping the church strong.

Mrs. Elizabeth Bieser, residing at 5150 Drake Road, states that she lives directly across the street from Armstrong Chapel. Mrs. Bieser comments that she is all for growth, but this addition is too big and it compromises the integrity of the Village, as well as diminishing property values in the area. Mrs. Bieser would like to see this request tabled for at least thirty days in order to allow time to resolve some of the concerns at hand.

Ms. Carol Tuthill, of 5475 William Henry Harrison Lane, notes that she is a member of the church. Ms. Tuthill states that there was a lot of effort put into investing in a way that would get as much value for the amount spent while minimizing the amount of construction required to meet the churches needs. The plan is for the same space to be used for multiple things.

Mr. Andy Webster, residing at 5535 Miami Road, states that he is also a member of the church. Mr. Webster comments that the 54% lot coverage has been talked about

repeatedly. He feels that Armstrong Chapel is more like a campus intersected by two streets including the cemetery, the old chapel, and Jefferson Schoolhouse. Stating that Armstrong is on a five acre lot with 54% lot coverage is somewhat misleading. The percentage of coverage is much lower if you consider the whole campus.

Mr. Joe Rhodenbaugh, at 8155 Indian Hill Road, states that he has a brother that lives directly across the street from Armstrong Chapel. His brother was unable to attend the meeting but did send a letter to Mr. Couch to be included as part of the public record.

Mr. Burns notes that there was also an email that was directed to Mr. Abbot Thayer from Hill Kohlen that is also part of the record.

Mr. Chip Nielsen, residing at 7275 Cayuga Drive, states that he has been a member of Armstrong Chapel for more than fifty years. He mentions that he serves on several church committees and is actively involved in the Contemporary Services. He has watched this service grow from inception to what it is today with anywhere from one hundred twenty to two hundred in attendance. The Contemporary Service represents a new style of service that has contributed to the growth of Armstrong Chapel and the needs of it need to be addressed. A key element of the future of Armstrong Chapel is the addition of a Contemporary Service building.

Mr. Mark Kuenning, of 8035 Remington Road, comments that he is the Chairman of Armstrong Chapel's Leadership Team. He expresses that it is not the intent of the church to become a "mega-church". There is a master plan that could include a Phase II in the future; however, that is not in the current plan.

Mr. Mills comments that the plans have been designed to meet the current needs of the church, not those of what might be expected in the future. Every effort has been made to minimize the size of the addition, while meeting today's needs.

Mr. Mills explains that delaying this project would cause the church hardship due to increasing construction costs and rising interest rates.

Mr. John Zaring, the Project Manager, comes before the Commission and notes that he developed the schedule for the building addition. They plan to bid the project during the month of July so they can present the exact cost to the church in August.

Mr. Gould asks the Commission for a continuation of at least two weeks to allow the church time to sit down with the neighbors that are directly impacted and address their concerns.

After further discussion, Mr. Thayer made a motion to continue the special exception request until June 30, 2009. Mr. Ottenjohn seconded, and the motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Thayer made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ottenjohn seconded, and the motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane G. Koppenhoefer, Chairman Pro-tem

ATTEST:

Michael W. Burns, Secretary