

## APPROVED

### MINUTES OF THE OTTAWA PLAN COMMISSION MEETING February 27, 2023

Vice-Chairman John Stone called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM in the Ottawa City Council Chambers.

**ROLL CALL** - Present: Stone, Hughes, Mangold, Sesto, McConville, Burns. Absent: Barron, Volker, Ruiz Others: City Planner Doug Carroll

#### **MINUTES**

McConville made the motion to approve the minutes from the October 24, 2022 meeting.

Seconded by Mangold.

Ayes: Stone, Hughes, Mangold, Sesto, McConville, Burns

Nays: None

Motion Carried.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. *Public hearing to consider a request from Rev. Michael Brunner for a conditional use for a place of formal worship located at 121 E. Prospect.*

Stone opened the public hearing. Tom Justice, attorney for the petitioner Michael Brunner, spoke on behalf of the petitioner. He stated the owner is looking to bring the property into conformance with the zoning ordinance. He noted the petitioner is looking to have meditations, Buddhist services, and retreats on a small scale. He said they are proposing small class sizes of 3-5 people a few times a week and retreats of around 5. Justice noted the only change to the exterior is some additional driveway space to accommodate off street parking, there will be no exterior renovations. He stated the petitioner does live in the home.

Hughes clarified if there will be additional services other than what is happening now. Justice stated there will be no additional. He noted they are currently holding the practices and are looking to bring the use into zoning compliance. The services have been consistent in size for a while and they are not looking to expand. Hughes asked if the goal is not to grow. Brunner stated it was not. He does not want to have a lot of people at one time because then he cannot offer individualized attention. Justice noted the nature of the practice is individualized. Brunner

noted there is a long history of Buddhist practices opening up in the United States in homes. They are not megachurches.

McConville asked Brunner to elaborate on the types of classes. Brunner stated there are 3 types of categories. Beginners that are curious and starting to learn, those that are practicing, and those that are practicing but want to be more physically able to practice. He stated it is typically referred to yoga. McConville asked about retreats. Brunner stated the max they could have is 10 because they have 5 bedrooms. Brunner explained a typical retreat involves waking up, stretching, meditation, have a talk, more stretching, more meditation, more talking. He said they may even do yard work. McConville asked if they charge a fee. Brunner stated they ask for a donation. Justice asked what is the max number of people you have had at a retreat. Brunner stated 5. Justice noted there is no need for street parking.

Burns asked how many parking spots are needed. Brunner said they could fit 12 on site but he said that takes a little direction from him in organizing the cars. He stated his goal is to have no impact on the neighborhood. He said people have parked on the street but he said that is because he didn't realize it might be an issue and could do a better job of informing people.

Burns was confused as to why yoga and retreats are considered formal worship. Brunner explained yoga and retreats are part of the Buddhist religion. Burns asked if this is not similar to a bed and breakfast. Justice explained the frequency of use and openness to the public would be big differences. He noted you can't just show up, it is specific to worship and scheduled. Retreats are spread out throughout the year. Justice noted there is a part of him that felt it is already zoned appropriately. He stated there is nothing that prevents a homeowner from inviting people over to their home for meditation or yoga. He felt the difference is since they are promoting to the community that it crossed the line into formal worship and should require the conditional use permit.

Hughes asked how many retreats for 2023. Brunner said they have had 2 so far. He stated depending on demand he could have 3 or 4 more.

Burns asked what is the max number of people for a retreat. Brunner stated 10. He also stated there would be no street parking.

Burns asked if any street parking would be needed? Brunner stated for a Saturday meditation there could be parking on the street. Hughes asked how long is a meditation session. Brunner stated 1.5 hours. He noted he just never thought to ask people not to park on the street but will do so. Brunner stated if the meditations became so popular he could not accommodate the cars, he would change the class frequency to cap the number of participants.

Stone opened the meeting up to public questions.

Wayne Valentinsen, 127 E. Prospect - went over the history of the petitioner's property and that it was formerly a bed and breakfast. He said there are currently cars parking in the street. He was worried about it growing and changing.

Nancy Valentinsen, 127 E. Prospect - said there are a lot of people that use the street and was worried about more cars. She stated she thought the street wasn't wide enough. She was worried what could happen if the services grow.

Stone asked if they have had any problems with the current owner/use. They stated they had not.

Jack White, no address given, stated lives behind petitioner - noted he doesn't know one church that doesn't want to grow and thought they should look for a different spot.

Justice noted the petitioner shares the concerns with traffic and safety of children playing in the street because their children are among them. He stated the goal is not to grow to a large size. He stated this is more of a mentorship type practice. He said accommodating parking is something they can do and is allowed in residential zoning. He noted people don't just show up. Petitioner Brunner knows how many people are going to come because they have to sign up.

Stone summarized the issues of parking and number of guests. He noted if there were abuses on the property the City could rescind the conditional use.

Some discussion occurred about parking on the street. The petitioner asked for the allowance of 5 cars in the street. They clarified that retreats will be accommodated on site. The petitioner noted they will educate their members to park on site for the classes additionally.

***Being no further discussion, McConville made the motion to concur with the findings of fact as outlined in the Staff Report and recommend approval of a conditional use permit for a place of formal worship located at 121 E. Prospect subject following stipulations:***

- 1. No more than 15 vehicles at any one time, including no more than 5 in the street.***
- 2. Retreat parking is accommodated on site.***

**Seconded by Mangold.**

Ayes: Stone, Hughes, Mangold, Sesto, McConville, Burns

Nays: None

Being no further business, Stone adjourned the meeting at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Douglas Carroll, AICP  
Carroll Planning, LLC