

City of Bellefontaine Neighbors
Planning & Zoning Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2023

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.

Present: Members Barrett, Duhadway, Gordon, Lane (by phone) and City Engineer Klein
Absent/Excused: Mayor Pierson, Members White and Borzymowski

Member Duhadway made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Member Gordon. The motion passed unanimously.

Member Duhadway made a motion to approve the November 14, 2022 minutes, seconded by Member Gordon. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

10600 Bellefontaine Road at Belgrove Drive, zoned R-1 Single Family Dwelling District (20,000 sq. ft.)
Informal discussion prior to Conditional Use Permit application about a proposed homeless shelter per Sec. 29-29(b)(11) and Sec 29-95.

True Transformation Church (lessees of Bellefontaine United Methodist Church)

Represented by Pastor, Trish Williams, Deacon Eric Williams, Evangelist Sherry Thomas

True Transformation's letter of intent & correspondence was provided to all Commission members days ahead of time.

Chair provided a hard copy of Sections 29-94 Conditional Use Regulations – Purpose and 29-95 Same-Procedures to True Redemption staff. Chair briefly reviewed the purpose behind and application procedures surrounding Conditional Use Permits including a required public hearing before the Board of Alderpersons. Documentation requirements and "Burden of Proof" was read from respective portions of the city code. This information had been forwarded previously to Pastor Williams via e-mail.

In her opening statement, Pastor Williams said their proposed homeless shelter is a response to an opioid crisis in our area. The proposed shelter will be for women only with up to one child each. It will not be a shelter for victims of domestic violence and will not be a confidential location.

When asked about her experience running homeless shelters, Pastor Williams stated she was program manager for Shalom House on South Taylor near Kingshighway for a number of years. Subsequent research revealed Shalom House closed in 2015 due to lack of funds.

When asked about accreditation, licensing or approval from government agencies, Pastor Williams stated Shalom House did not have state or government involvement, implying the same for the proposed shelter.

She said funding for operating the shelter would be by the church only initially, then they will pursue outside funding. She stated that NACA (a homebuyer's association) would help with funding later. It is assumed NACA stands for Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America, an institution that can help with low cost home financing. It is unclear how that translates into operational funding of the proposed shelter.

Pastor Williams went on to say that all potential residents will be screened before being accepted and will be required to sign a contract for 12-18 months to become a resident. She stated a volunteer psychiatric nurse will come in to help with mental health issues.

Meals, three per day, will be prepared for and served to residents seven days a week by volunteers. No smoking or alcohol would be allowed in the shelter. When asked if residents will be required to contribute towards their stay, she said residents will only pay for the cost of their toiletries.

Security for the facility was briefly discussed. Pastor Williams stated security cameras are already in place. Volunteers will undergo security training. The Commission emphasized the need for security and 24/7 trained staffing as opposed to volunteers. Pastor Williams stated residential monitors will be on staff.

According to their Letter of Intent, "the proposed shelter...will be in operation daily by our church membership and community volunteers". There was concern expressed by Commission members about dependence on volunteers to operate and provide security for the shelter which would operate around the clock, seven days a week.

Residents will be allowed to have weekend passes and be picked up at the shelter. Pastor Williams was asked if their staff would know where the residents were going. She said residents would have to sign in & out as they come and go. They will not be allowed to have visitors (guests) at the shelter.

Individual living units (subdivided classrooms) will not have individual bathrooms. Plans are for residents to use the six restrooms in the school and three bathrooms with bathtubs/showers in the Parsonage (a separate building). Pastor Williams stated they are making cosmetic changes to classrooms to convert them into living units. There was some discussion of existing foldable partitions as walls in the classrooms. City Engineer Klein stated he would have to consult with the building code to determine if either arrangement is allowable.

Chair asked why was the Church wanting to open a homeless shelter now and put money into the building if the Church is only leasing the property? He said if True Transformation Church were not to buy the building later on, any investment in the facility would be lost. It seemed more logical to open a shelter, with its attendant costs, after buying the property rather than before that point. Pastor Williams stated they have a lease to own contract with the property owners. They will buy the property in three years.

Their letter of intent forwarded before the meeting stated “the proposed shelter will house up to 16 participants at one time...” There was no mention of a focus on individuals with chemical dependencies. Conversely, Pastor Williams supplied an Executive Summary to Commission members during the meeting. It stated their “program will serve up to 18 women over a twelve (12) to eighteen (18) month period....”, two (2) more residents than in their letter of intent. From context, it is assumed 16 or 18 residents would not include children; children would be in addition to those numbers. Their original letter of intent stated “...16 participants at one time (or as many as the fire safety code will allow for the space...)”

After discussion about 10600 Bellefontaine concluded, Chair congratulated member Gordon on a citizen’s award given to him for tackling someone who stole and crashed a car in Bellefontaine, holding them until police arrived.

Our next scheduled meeting is March 13, 2023.

Member Duhadway made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Gordon. Motion passed unanimously. Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Barrett
Chair, Planning & Zoning Commission