

Religious complex site plan gets tentative OK

By Ralph R. Echlinaw
staff writer

A Lubavitch Foundation plan to build a religious complex in West Bloomfield received tentative approval from the township planning commission Tuesday.

Planning commissioners voted unanimously to approve a "conceptual site plan," but set restrictions on density in line of the foundation's refusal to name a purpose for the north half of the 40-acre site.

The Farmington Hills based Lubavitch, part of an orthodox Jewish order, is determined to build a religious center north of Maple Road and west of Drake, adjacent to the Jewish Community Center. Lubavitch officials have been going round and round with the township planning commission since October 1988 in a diligent attempt to bring the project to fruition.

The project will comprise 20 buildings, including a small rabbinical college and a synagogue. The planning commission adopted

restrictions for the project based on how much traffic, ground coverage and sewage capacity the property would generate or need if it were developed as a subdivision.

The planning staff recommended the following maximums:

- 60 sewer units (one unit being as much capacity as a house would need).

- 540 cars moving in and out of the property daily.

- No buildings higher than 35 feet.

- And ground coverage (buildings, parking lots, etc.) shall not exceed 21 percent of the 40 acres.

The plan now goes to the township board of trustees, probably at its second February meeting, for a public hearing and approval or disapproval. Lubavitch will also ask the board for a "special use permit," which is sort of a permission slip to build a religious facility in a area zoned for single family houses.

Should the board approve the conceptual site plan and special use permit, Lubavitch must draw a detailed

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site plan, then return to the planning commission for another recommended approval, then gain the township board's recommendation for approval, and then return to the box of trustees.

The problem Lubavitch has at this point is that the proposed projects to use 55 sewer units, according to township planner Tom Bit.

Since Lubavitch is only allowed 60 sewer units, just five would be left over to use when the north portion of the property is developed.

However, Lubavitch director of planning David Kagan said if you won't even "think about" what out on the north half of the property for 10 years.

Kagan did rule out one use though. "I know we're not going to put a nuclear reactor there, obviously," he said.



Peter Baldwin

Hills house afire

Farmington Hills firefighters respond to this house fire in the 21000 block of Averhill early Tuesday. "We believe it was the furnace," said deputy fire Chief Peter Baldwin. When

firefighters arrived at the unoccupied house — bearing a "for sale" sign, they found heavy smoke coming from the interior. Damage was estimated at \$60,450.

Business owners invited to breakfast

If you are a business owner in Farmington Hills, watch for an invitation from the city's zoning division to attend a breakfast meeting soon.

The breakfast meetings are designed to allow you to meet with the staff members as well as with the code and zoning inspectors responsible for your particular area of the city.

The meetings also are designed to foster a better understanding of the city's zoning and code ordinances, as well as providing a channel of communication with city hall. Questions you can expect

to be discussed at the meetings include:

- Must a dumpster be closed at all times?

- Who in city hall would you turn to for assistance on interior or exterior remodeling information for your building?

- Are there any programs to allow for trees to be planted along the city's rights of way?

The city's zoning division is part of the planning and community development departments. For more information, call the zoning office at 473-9525.

Hills tops are coat donations

Farmington Hills residents one through again. Community residents collected the most coats of 25 participating cities in WJLB's Coats 'n' Kids campaign during the rent holiday season.

More than 500 coats and jackets were deposited in bins at Farmington Hills City Hall and the 12th branch of the Farmington Community Library. By Christmas, more than 20,000 new and used coats had been collected from the participating communities.

The donated coats and jackets were distributed to public schools in the metropolitan area and through Salvation Army programs, which accommodate needy and homeless families.

"Your efforts made a significant impact on the success of WJLB's 1991 campaign. We received a tremendous response from the residents. They really came through with a great spirit and heart. Thanks to all who donated," said Bernadette Hanks, WJLB's special projects coordinator.

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