

## Observer Report

**Council or Committee:** Planning & Development

**Date:** January 11, 2010

**Observer:** Nancy Bashook

**Aldermen Present:** Wilson, Wynne, Holmes, Rainey, Jean Baptiste

**Staff:** Walker, Dir. of Community Development; Bill Dunkley; new lawyer; Dona Spicuzza

**Media:** EvanstonNOW, Roundtable

**Meeting began:** 7:05 pm

**Meeting ended:** 8:10 pm

### Items for Consideration

(P1) **Ordinance 122-O-09 Amending Various Portions of the Zoning Ordinance Relating to the Creation of the "Resale Establishment" Use**

**Staff and Plan Commission (12-9-09) recommend adoption of Ordinance: a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance defines "Resale Establishments" as a use of land and allows such establishments in the Business, Commercial, Downtown, Research Park, and MXE Mixed Use Employment zoning districts. The proposed ordinance would allow Resale Establishments under 5,000 sq. ft. in gross floor area as permitted uses in those districts, and would allow uses of 5,000 sq. ft or more to operate only by special use permit. Resale Establishments would not be allowed in any districts other than those listed. This item was introduced at Council and referred back to Committee on December 14, 2009.**

Ald. Rainey likes the amendment and feels it is really important, but the size is too great. Many places do both consignment and drop-off, so this should be considered the same. She prefers no requirement for square footage and that this apply to both non-profit and for-profit stores. She proposed an amendment to change the 5,000 sq. ft. to no square footage and eliminate the distinction between resale and consignment.

Rainey is concerned about stuff left on the sidewalk outside of resale shops. She says this is a fabulous opportunity to have thrift shops in this economy, but can be difficult in certain neighborhoods. Ald. Wynne says no problem with stores in 3rd Ward. Salvation Army discourages people from dropping off on the street. She believes these stores can be an asset to the community.

There was a motion by Ald. Rainey to approve as she amended. The amendment was clarified to state that all instances of resale shops will be handled as a 'special use'. Consignment shops will be included in the definition of resale shops.

(P2) **Major Variance Application for 2433 Cowper Avenue**

**The Zoning Board of Appeals (12-1-09) recommends denial of a proposed variance to establish an open parking space in the front yard of 2433 Cowper Avenue. This reverses the recommendation of the Site Plan and Appearance Review Committee (SPAARC) to approve the proposed variance with the condition that it be limited in effect to a "reasonable amount of time" based on the applicant's family hardship, after which it would expire. SPAARC also recommended that such an expiration be eligible for extension upon application by the property owner. The proposal was heard before SPAARC on November 25, 2009**

Mr. Kline explained that he bought the house to be close to his 89 year-old mother who lives at Presbyterian Homes. He explained difficulty of getting his invalid mother into the house from the street or the alley. Neighbors already signed a written consent in favor of this request. There was concern about others using the parking space. A suggestion was made to put a handicapped sign there and/or concrete barriers to keep others from parking in the spot. Ald. Tendam spoke on Mr. Kline's behalf and explained that the alley in back of the house is hazardous. Ald. Rainey moved to approve variation with a life side condition (as long as mother is alive).

Approved

**(P3) Request from SHORE Services for up to \$37,000 in HOME funds to rehab their "Community Integrated Living Arrangement" Property on Brown Avenue**

**SHORE Community Services requests a HOME-funded forgivable loan to repair and improve a single family home for two disabled adults receiving housing and services through SHORE's Community Integrated Living Arrangement (CILA) Program.**

This request is for remodeling the kitchen and roof on a house and garage for two autistic men. Rainey asked if property taxes are paid on the house. The answer is no. Not every non-profit is off the tax rolls. The cost would be \$17,000 to remodel the kitchen and \$13,000 for the roof. There have been several leaks and repair jobs to the roof, but it now needs a total rehab. Ald. Wilson said that the cost seems okay. Dona Spicuzza explained that the city inspector did look at the property and will review the bids.

Held in committee until the next meeting, after more bids are received.

**(P4) Request from Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs for \$25,000 in Affordable Housing funds for Foreclosure Prevention Counseling**

**Interfaith Housing Center is requesting funding that would supplement \$104,000 from HUD, Cook County and other sources to expand the agency's foreclosure prevention program and provide part time staffing at the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center.**

Ald. Jean-Baptiste asked if counseling is making a difference. The executive director of Interfaith housing, Gail Schechter, said there were a record number (300) foreclosure cases in Evanston last year. They have great successes in lowering interest rates, but lenders won't cut the principle. Overall, they were able to help one-third stay in their homes, about one-third lost jobs and had no income, and one-third did not follow through. Language barrier is a problem. Gail has hired staff who speak Spanish, Polish and Russian. Skokie has exceeded Evanston in the highest number of foreclosures. Dona Spicuzza will work more closely with Gail to identify the foreclosures so that the city can follow-up.

Approved.

**(P5) Request from Connections for the Homeless for \$11,000 in matching funds for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**

**Connections for the Homeless is requesting funding from the Affordable Housing Fund that would match a HUD grant of \$41,640 to the Evanston Alliance on Homelessness for administration of its Homeless Management Information System administered by Connections for the Homeless.**

Ald. Rainey asked Paul Selden, Executive Director of Connections, about his organization being highly funded and salaries increased 16 percent at a time when every budget is being cut.

Mr. Selden explained that he did raise salaries to a minimum up to \$32,000, increased staff and added new programs which were paid for by restrictive funds. Because of the \$11,000 matching funds, the city will get \$1.3 million. If the Alliance merges with the North Suburban Alliance, then this money may not be necessary in the future. Right now there are double the number of people on the streets because of the recession, so it is difficult to evaluate the efforts made to reduce the homeless population.

Ald. Wynne asked Mr. Selden to provide the committee with an evaluation of Connection's successes and to show how many of the homeless are Evanston residents.

Approved.