

The Muscatine County Zoning Commission met in the Board of Supervisors Office on Friday, February 3, 2017, with Chairperson Tom Harper and board members Emily Geertz, Virginia Cooper, Carol Schlueter, and Clyde Evans present. Eric S. Furnas, Planning & Zoning Administrator and Dixie Seitz, Office Administrator were also in attendance.

Others present for this hearing: Gary Carlson and David Mueller.

Tom Harper: I will open the public hearing of the Muscatine County Zoning Commission. I would like to read our mission statement. The Muscatine County Zoning Commission is a five member group of residents of the County who are appointed by the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors. We serve as non-professionals and without compensation. Our purpose is to advise the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors on managing the growth of the County. This involves reviewing subdivisions, rezoning requests, the use of public property, and reports related to land use policy and long range planning. Recognizing that our decisions will not satisfy everyone, we attempt to base our decisions on what is best for the long term interest of the County. We ask for your input, pro or con, on issues before us in order that we may formulate the best decisions possible. Please take this opportunity to share your thoughts and concerns with us. Our recommendations are not taken lightly by the Board of Supervisors, but the Board of Supervisors, your elected representatives, make the final decisions on all issues. Eric, would you like to read the request?

Eric Furnas: Zoning Agenda Item #1. Christian Life of Muscatine Church, by Pastor Steven Brown, Record Owners, request rezoning their property at 2921 Hwy. 22 from the present C-1 Commercial District to the proposed R-1 Residential District. This property is located in Sweetland Township, in the NW¼ of Sec. 29-T77N-R1W, North of Hwy. 22, containing approximately 1.16 acres.

Tom Harper: Okay, is the applicant or their representative here?

David Mueller: Yes, I am David Mueller on behalf of Christian Life Church.

Tom Harper: Okay, I must advise you that this is a five member board. Today we only have four members present. For your request to be recommended for approval to the Board of Supervisors, we would have to have a majority vote. If it's a tie vote, that is the same as a negative recommendation. You can either proceed today or we can table it until next month and I can't guarantee that we would have five members next month.

David Mueller: I will go ahead.

Tom Harper: Okay would you care to state your name again and tell us a little about the request?

David Mueller: Sure, my name is David Mueller. I am a student pastor for the Christian Life Church on behalf of Steven Brown, the senior pastor. I am here to represent him for our church.

Tom Harper: Okay, can you tell us a little about your request?

David Mueller: Yes we resided over there at Isett and Hancock; it was a smaller building there. We just sold that to a non-emergency transportation company and we purchased the building at Hwy. 22. It was previously a restaurant and we are going to try to turn that into a church. We have plans to have an outreach for the youth in the City of Muscatine. I am actually over the youth. Then also we were going to turn it into a non-profit church facility.

Tom Harper: Right. Is there any correspondence?

Eric Furnas: No.

Tom Harper: Eric, do you have anything to add?

Eric Furnas: The Christian Life Church purchased this property and then approached us about building permits to do some remodeling. That's when we discovered that the current C-1 Commercial District does not accommodate churches, which was kind of a surprise to me because they are almost in every other zoning district. So we started looking into surrounding land uses and you know, right away they asked what would be the appropriate course of action to remedy that zoning issue. Given the fact that there is no other commercial zoning in this immediate area, this stood out to me as spot zoning. So I recommended that the best course of action would be for the commission to rezone it to R-1 Residential District, churches are already a permitted use in R-1 Residential District. That would accommodate their desires to operate a church within the guidelines of the zoning district, as well as I believe, to remove that spot zoning issue that Muscatine County sees on that one parcel of land. Should they continue to grow and maybe move onto another facility then we don't have the commercial zoning, a more intrusive use on that property. So it would remain residential and be in harmony with the surrounding uses. There is industrial across the highway, the Hon Genevieve Plant has a fairly large industrial property. But everything on the north side of the highway is either residential or further up the bluff it is agricultural.

Virginia Cooper: I have a question. What did you say about accommodating the city with extra children's activities?

David Mueller: No the purpose or mission of that church is to reach the city's families. I mean, that's just our vision. I'm saying that would allow us to have a place for the children to come for an outreach program.

Virginia Cooper: Okay, I just misheard you.

David Mueller: I apologize. I am a little nervous being here.

Virginia Cooper: No that's fine.

Tom Harper: Okay, and for the record please note that our fifth member has arrived at the meeting so we do have a full board now.

Clyde Evans: You can get started now. (laughter)

Carol Schlueter: Okay, my question is, when the church purchased this property... you were not told that the zoning was not correct to have a church there?

David Mueller: From my understanding, no.

Carol Schlueter: Okay.

Virginia Cooper: When did you purchase this?

David Mueller: We purchased right around Christmas time.

Virginia Cooper: Of 2016?

David Mueller: Yes ma'am. We haven't moved the congregation in yet. We are in a temporary location now.

Carol Schlueter: To me, that is a real estate error. They should have checked into that prior to purchasing.

David Mueller: From my understating, there have been a couple of those but that is out of my department.

Carol Schlueter: Okay, I understand.

Eric Furnas: Yeah it looks like it was the 20th of December when this property transferred.

Tom Harper: Is there any other questions or comments from anyone here? If so, please state your name first.

Gary Carlson: I am Gary Carlson with HNI Corporation. I am representing the HON Geneva Plant, which is just right across the street. I don't think that we have any objections. In fact, over the years compared to some of what the other uses have been, we think that probably a church is a better neighbor to us. Although I must admit that I am not familiar with your church. I trust that it's a normal church, it's not a... there's no animal sacrifices or anything like that?

David Mueller: (He said something that the recorder did not pick up)

Gary Carlson: But your intention is to operate it like a normal church facility?

David Mueller: Yes, our statement is: When Life Comes Together. It's where families and children come and they can feel like they are a part of something.

Gary Carlson: You know, one of the concerns that we have had over the years is when there has been alcohol served there and the concern of what activities take place or it's late at night and encroachment into our parking.

David Mueller: I can tell you there will be no alcohol served there.

Gary Carlson: I don't think there will be a problem, so we have no objections to this rezoning.

Carol Schlueter: So the parking, there is plenty of parking there for your congregation?

David Mueller: Yes ma'am.

Carol Schlueter: Okay.

Clyde Evans: How many cars can you accommodate?

David Mueller: I don't know how big of parking lot it is, but our church membership is only about 30 to 45 members. But we've had people come over and they've looked at the building and there is plenty of parking. As of right now, I believe HNI employees are using it to park across the street. So it's been a friendly friendship there thus far.

Gary Carlson: And your services are predominately on Sunday's?

David Mueller: We have a Sunday service and we have a Wednesday bible study in the evening, then in the summer we might have Saturday fellowship.

Gary Carlson: Yeah, I don't anticipate that there will be any problems. Yes, our people will park wherever it's the closest.

Virginia Cooper: Well it does sound like it's an improvement of what it has been in the past.

Carol Schlueter: Yes.

Virginia Cooper: I do remember it as being a fraternal organization.

Emily Geertz: Right.

Tom Harper: Is there any other questions, comments, concerns? Hearing none, I will entertain a motion.

Emily Geertz: I will make a motion to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of this proposed rezoning request to rezone the property located at 2921 Hwy. 22 from the present C-1 Commercial District to the proposed R-1 Residential District.

Virginia Cooper: I will second the motion.

Tom Harper: A motion has been made and seconded to recommend to the Board of Supervisors approval of this proposed rezoning request for property owned by Christian Life of Muscatine Church, and it has been seconded. Is there any other discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of the motion signify by saying Aye (5) Opposed (0). The motion carries. This will move onto the Board of Supervisors with a favorable recommendation.

MUSCATINE COUNTY ZONING COMMISSION
By Eric S. Furnas, Planning & Zoning Administrator