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## Preschool Gets Okay for New Location

By *Cathy Tyson*

After multiple public hearings in front of the Planning Commission, Building Bridges Preschool got a green light to relocate from Our Savior's Lutheran Church on Carol Lane to a home directly adjacent to the church property - a former parsonage owned by the church.

Contrary to some misconceptions, the approval of this conditional land use permit is not a re-zoning; certain uses of a residence require a permit because there may be impacts associated with the use.

Operating a preschool is allowed by right in single-family homes in Lafayette. The city can specify certain conditions of approval like the hours of operation, recess space and landscaping to limit the impact on neighbors. "A use permit is a living thing," said J. Alan Sayles, planning commissioner, explaining that the applicant must continue to meet conditions or face its revocation.

Neighbors along Carol Lane, many of whom have lived there for decades, expressed their strong concerns about the relocation including the effect on their property values, noise and traffic. Others objected to a secular commercial entity renting the home, calling it "commercial over reach."

While it's true that small children can officially be considered "mobile noise sources," Sandra Swimmer, the owner and operator of the preschool, clarified that the maximum number of children on any given day is 30, with students divided into two groups of a maximum of 15 kids in each. She pointed out that not all the children come every day. The recess area they will use is in the front of the house that faces the church, and the house itself acts as a noise buffer. The commission would not allow the preschoolers to use the spacious back yard.

Because the school is shifting only slightly southward, and parents will still use the church parking lot for pick up and drop off, commissioners didn't see an issue there.

"I have trouble finding something to object to," said commissioner Will Lovitt. He acknowledged that day care facilities in residential neighborhoods are encouraged by the city's General Plan. Assistant planner Sarah Allen said the city has never received a complaint from the code enforcement officer about a preschool in a residential neighborhood. After much discussion, the land use permit was approved - with the condition that additional landscaping be done to function as a noise buffer from the adjacent neighbor.

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