

Airport Heights Community Council

Advisory Committee – Midnight Sun Montessori

(MSM comments dated April 1, 2010 inserted into original report in this font)

Introduction

The Advisory Committee met three times, on February 1, February 10, and February 15, 2010, with all members in attendance each time. (Suzann Speckman, Bruce Rowe, Deb McIntyre, Shirley Valek Wilson, Jessica Cochran, Dick Snyder). Church representatives Bea Peterson and Nina Thomas attended the 2nd and 3rd meetings. Michael Baffrey attended the 1st and 3rd meetings, representing Midnight Sun Montessori (MSM). Bill Hall and Dick LaFever facilitated all three meetings.

During the first and second meetings, we developed an extensive list of “pros and cons”, positive and negative impacts of having a childcare facility in the neighborhood. (see attached notes) Some of those are not mitigable. For instance, the area is zoned R-1 residential; a childcare facility does not comply with that zoning (and thus requires a conditional use permit.) In the third meeting, we focused on the issues that may be mitigable, and heard from MSM on their plans for addressing concerns. Those ideas are summarized below. Not all but some of the mitigation measures may be appropriate to include in a conditional use permit.

I. Traffic & Parking

Neighbors are concerned about increased traffic in the neighborhood – generally (on 20th, Sunrise, Birchwood) and more specifically on Alder, 18th, and the alley between 18th and 20th. There is concern about increased pollution, speeding in the neighborhood, and childcare parents and/or staff dominating street parking in front of residences.

Recommended Mitigation Measures (all members of the advisory committee are in support)

- * Request additional All-way Stop sign at Alder & 18th
- * Request additional All-way stop sign at Alder & 20th
- * Request additional All-way stop sign at 18th & Sunrise

*Request additional speed bumps on 20th near the intersection of Alder and on Sunrise near the intersection with 18th

* Request Residential Parking only designations/signs for north side of 18th Avenue, and south side except in front of church (APD enforceable)

* Staff will park in designated on-site spots only, not on streets

* Parents will be asked to use off-street parking or the street spaces only directly in front of the church

* No idling cars during pick up/drop-off; no loud music, car alarms, etc

* Parents will be required to sign agreement to follow traffic/parking procedures. Repeated violations may result in child being removed from program.

* Snow plowing and removal between 7 am and 10 pm only; snow will be hauled away as needed to provide adequate parking and keep neighbors' alley-accessed driveways and backyard gate access clear

MSM comments:

Agree to signage allowed by Municipal/State laws and regulations. As is the Friends Church policy, both the church and childcare will be a no-idle zone—this will be stipulated in the MSM Parent and Personnel Handbooks. The Friends Church has previously stated their snow plowing company will make every effort to accommodate neighbor concerns. In addition, snow plowers will drop a blade in the active driveways of neighbors adjacent to the Friends Church property off the alley. Snow plowing in the day may require Friends Church and MSM staff and administrators to temporarily park their vehicles on the streets.

Possible Mitigation Measures (discussed, but not everyone agrees)

* Post signs at each end of the alley (at the 20th St entrance and at the turn around where the one-ways come together) stating “Residential access only”.

* Elimination of late pick up fees. (Parents who face fines are more likely to speed.)

* Off-street parking for special events (Friends Church already has agreement with Trinity Christian Reformed Church allowing use of their parking)

* MSM to have staff monitoring outside during high traffic pick-up/drop-off times

* provide block heater plug ins for staff to reduce their need to leave cars idling to warm up at end of cold days

MSM comments:

Agree to signage allowed by Municipal/State laws and regulations. Late fees will only be assessed to compensate MSM staff for overtime required past normal hours of operation. The MSM Parent and Personnel Handbooks will stipulate preferred parking locations. Also the Special-event notices will state the recommended parking locations. MSM suggests the Airport Heights community, Friends Church and MSM provide volunteer monitors as needed to help educate the parents to the preferred traffic patterns. MSM will work with the Friends Church on the feasibility of providing block-heater plug-ins.

II. Noise & Operations

Neighbors are concerned about the increased noise, particularly of children playing on the playground, as well as the loss of privacy associated with having the childcare facility directly behind their backyards. In particular, there is concern about the long hours of the program, and its year-round nature (unlike a school, there is no summer vacation.) In the past, the building's alarm system has been tripped regularly, which is very loud. Trash on the streets is a concern.

Recommended Mitigation Measures (all members of the advisory committee are in support)

- * no outside play time before 9 am
- * a designated, scheduled, consistent quiet time in early afternoon (no kids on playground during this quiet time)
- * close/lock playground after hours (Church concerned about liability also)
- * daily clean up outside facility (sidewalks, alley, etc)
- * maximum enrollment set at 55 in conditional use permit (no multiple shifts of kids in one day allowed)
- * alarm will be reactivated by the church and one pass code will be given to the church and one to the school – each will be responsible to resolve the alarms if they go off.

MSM comments:

The intent that neighbors could have a time when they expect no kids to be outside for one or two hours but children could be outside the rest of the day. MSM agrees with the possible case-by-case exception regarding scheduling outdoor time. Unless

there is an extreme weather event, it is MSM philosophy that the children will have daily outdoor time. While MSM intends to meet the schedules requested above, there may be circumstances which require exceptions. An option would be for children to go for a walk or to a neighborhood park or playground if they need to be active during this “quiet time.”

Possible Mitigation Measures (discussed, but not everyone agrees)

- * noise abatement fencing along back of neighbors’ property lines
- * close in summer
- * request reduced enrollment in summer

MSM Comments (noise abatement fencing too expensive, can’t close in summer, more to come later)

MSM Comments:

MSM will work with the Friends Church on the feasibility of noise abatement fencing. For administrative, staffing and parent considerations, enrollment numbers will be based upon allowable licensing limits and consistent year round.

III. Facility

We did not discuss landscaping in detail, leaving that to the site plan process, but here are some general thoughts.

All in Agreement:

- * follow spirit of landscaping ordinance (i.e. follow as much as possible)

MSM Comments:

At its 2824 Kimberlie Court location, MSM has done extensive landscaping with trees and shrubs far beyond the requirements of the Municipality’s Land-Use Department. At that location, MSM also installed an extensive raised-bed garden to expose the children to hands-on organic gardening and an appreciation for environmental stewardship. MSM will work with Friends Church members to maximize landscaping options within the environmental limits of the property. MSM and the Friends Church will also work with the Municipality on the adjacent city park lands and with adjacent neighborhood property owners.

Not everyone in Agreement:

- * Playground needs to be repaired/upgraded
- * more green, less pavement
- * follow landscaping ordinance
- * MOA needs to landscape the attached park triangle at the end of the church property

MSM Comments:

MSM will work with the Friends Church on upgrading the playground. See the response above for landscaping items.

IV. Trust

Midnight Sun Montessori says it wants to be a part of the community. Neighbors who lived adjacent to/nearby the old Anchorage Montessori are understandably having a hard time leaving things to good faith. So in addition to specific concrete concerns, there are issues of trust that need to be addressed. There is also a worry that MSM will try to buy the church property. Adjacent property owners want MSM and the wider neighborhood to understand that their properties protect or buffer the rest of the neighborhood from some of the negative impacts of having the childcare facility in the neighborhood.

Recommended Mitigation Measures (all members of the advisory committee are in support)

- * Establish a permanent advisory committee made up of church, MSM, community council members to address issues that arise
- * Waitlist/enrollment preference for residents living in the Airport Heights Community Council boundary.
- * Allow part-time (i.e. 2 or 3 day/ per week, full-day enrollment) for Airport Heights residents
- * Limit length of Conditional Use Permit with review before renewal (there is no consensus on the appropriate length, with 3 voting for 1 year, 2 for 5 years and I suggesting 3 years is most appropriate– see notes in attachment)

MSM Comments:

MSM agrees with having a permanent advisory body that is community-, Friends Church- and parent-based. MSM encourages a community-based childcare and in addition to priority placement on the wait list for Airport Heights and Friends Church-member parents, the application fees will also be waved. Part-time enrollment will be acceptable if an agreement is

arranged with two sets of parents resulting in the equivalent of one child being enrolled full-time at the facility. MSM will abide by the terms and conditions of the approved Conditional-Use Permit. If a time-limited permit is stipulated, then MSM will assess at the end of the term whether the cost and effort of pursuing an additional permit is warranted.

Possible Mitigation Measures (discussed, but no consensus)

*The Conditional Use Permit goes with the property. Limit Conditional Use Permit to use by MSM (if MSM leaves, any new child care operator would have to reapply for the permit)

* Reduced fees for Airport Heights Community Council residents

MSM response (opposed to reduced fees for local residents, **more to come**)

MSM Comments:

Facility and administrative expenses as well as staff salaries and training depend on consistent income based upon enrollment. While MSM promotes the enrollment at this facility of children of parents from the Airport Heights community and the Friends Church, allowing reduced monthly enrollment fees would ultimately affect the quality of the program being offered to their children.

(note: Attachments #1-#3 will be the notes from our 3 meetings)

Attachment #4 – Additional discussion/comments by email following our third meeting

FURTHER E-MAIL DISCUSSIONS OF STOP SIGNS

Dick Snyder: There is presently a stop sign on Alder at 20th and a stop sign on 18th at Sunrise. Additional stop signs on 20th at Alder and on Sunrise at 18th would increase noise and air pollution. A more effective way to reduce speed would be to install new style speed humps on 20th and on Sunrise near those intersections. Another option is a speed hump on Alder south of 18th.

Bruce Rowe: Stop signs are APD enforceable; and, they are a deterrent to people wanting to use a particular a route. They must stop and sometimes wait for others. Speed bumps must take other traffic issues into consideration such as emergency response and snow plowing.

DISCUSSION RE LATE PICK UP FEES:

Dick Snyder: Montessori could put the same stipulation as the previous bullet for late pickup.

Bruce Rowe: Fees are the deterrent. Nobody has time or the authority to police speed.

DISCUSSION RE REDUCED FEES FOR AIRPORT HEIGHTS RESIDENTS

Dick Snyder: A reduced fee would require more non-Airport Heights CC children, to compensate for loss of income. This would increase traffic.

Bruce Rowe: True, others coming into the neighborhood would pay more. This is a request for a good faith effort of MSM to be more involved in the community, AH community based families. Reduced fees would encourage participation from the neighborhood. For example, MSM business goals could be based on a percentage of participation at a level sufficient to make it attractable to all and yet make the MSM sustainable. This is a business, and I'm sure the business plan could easily account for the differences in fee structure.

DISCUSSION RE LENGTH OF CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

Dick Snyder: With reservations I vote for the conditional use permit should be for one year. My reservations are the following Under IV. Trust the bullet labeled "waitlist enrollment preference" I think the conditional use permit should be for 3 yr to allow current kids to graduate out so they can better give the APHCC the enrollment preference. My last comment, when does the 1,3 or 5 year conditional use permit period begin? Is it when/if MSM gets the permit or when they move kids into the church and are fully functional.