

**MARIEMONT PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING HELD APRIL 24, 2018**

The Mariemont Planning Commission met Tuesday April 24, 2018. Chairman DeBlasio called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Present were Mrs. Garber, Ms. Schwartz, Ms. Reed, Mr. Rich, Mr. Vianello and Mayor Policastro. Also in attendance was the Building Administrator Don Keyes.

Request from Cincinnati Waldorf School, 6743 Chestnut Street, Mariemont, OH 45227 to occupy 3915 Oak Street for the purpose of operating a high school.

*Finding of the Building Commissioner:* The zoning for the building at 3915 Oak Street is Business A, which is an acceptable zoning to operate a school. Mariemont code section 151.024 requires the Planning Commission to review the application. For parking purposes, the useable building area to be used for the school is approximately 2270 square feet. Mariemont code section 151.087 requires 1 parking space for every 225 square feet of useable space for a building use similar to this one. That requirement calculates to 10 off street parking spaces.

Mr. Joe Trauth, legal representative for Cincinnati Waldorf School, said the request is for parking. The current code does not address schools specifically with parking. Mr. Keyes used the current use as an office building. The proposed location is under contract. The Chestnut Street school location is at capacity and the Oak Street location would be an annex to be utilized as three additional classrooms. Children who would be taught at the Oak Street location would not be of driving age and would be transported by school buses. The Oak Street educational facility for their purposes will require five parking spots for three teachers, one teacher's aide and one administrator. At the maximum they would have five people who would need parking spaces. They are proposing to create two parking spaces in the rear of the building which would also be available for public parking during non-school days, nights and weekends which will increase the parking area in the Historic District. The remaining three spots would be provided across the street by a three car garage which will be leased by Waldorf School. The spaces are currently being leased by the current owner of the building and Waldorf would assume the lease. There is an additional 38 parking spots within 500 feet at the Ann Buntin Becker Park. During school hours only 10%-20% of the spaces are utilized by the public. Should there be more parking spots need they could be provided there within 500' as allowed by code. The Waldorf School will not change anything on the exterior of the building and will fully maintain and preserve the historic character of the building. Any changes or renovations to the interior would be under the jurisdiction of the building department. There have been many complaints towards the existing school which are being addressed by the Board and Administration of the Waldorf School. He believes under Section 151.089 (H)(I) they comply with the parking code.

Mr. Vianello asked what the total occupancy of the building will be. Mr. Trauth said there will be a total of 24 students.

Susan Gray, President of the Board Waldorf School, said the first year will be a group of 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Right now 10 are enrolled. Mr. Vianello said he needs to know the total building occupancy and as a school has Waldorf gone to the State Board of Education to seek an occupancy requirement for the building. Ms. Gray said they received a charter for the school.

Mr. Patrick Gates, Vice-President of the Board Waldorf School, said currently the occupancy for the building is most likely 10-15 people.

Mr. Alex Blust, parent of a student at Waldorf School, said the occupancy will be determined when the final construction is done on the property. It will easily encompass the number of people they will have. Mr. Vianello said he wants to know the current occupancy is which should be a known factor. He is under the impression that the State Board of Education sets occupancy requirements per classroom. It is up to the local fire district to come in and they will determine whether that meets their standards for safety. Ms. Gray said the maximum number of students in year three will be 24. At the fourth year they will be looking for another building for the high school and will use the Oak Street location as an annex for the Chestnut Street location. Mr. Vianello said at some point the high school children will drive. Mr. Blust said the goal is by the time the students get to the point of being able to drive to school that a new high school building will be in place. As we have listened to what the community has said about being better neighbors we want to make sure we are doing all those things. We feel that the plans have been drawn in such a way that the occupancy will fit for the kids we will have in the building.

Mr. Vianello asked if there would be a guarantee that the leases on the garages for parking would be a long term lease as long as they own the building. Ms. Gray said yes – Waldorf School could write a guarantee that they would have those parking spots. Mr. Blust said he does not believe that would be an issue and could get clarification. He wants the goal of this to make them better neighbors not worse. This location provides the opportunity to provide education options for this communities and communities beyond. Mr. Vianello said he does not believe the school can count on extra parking being available in the surrounding area. He is looking out for the best interest of the Village and its residents and right now I have concerns about parking. Mr. Blust said the community uses the parking around the park more in the evening and the reason the Village has a parking problem is because it is such a great Village and everyone wants to come here.

Mrs. Garber asked how many children are in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Gray said 18 in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 17 in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Connie Davis, Spanish Teacher Waldorf School, explained that the high school will share teachers with the grade school. Those teachers will walk between the two locations. As examples, Spanish and music are expansion programs and will be taught at both locations. She further explained the detailed way classes are broken down and taught. They will be hiring two new teachers who will remain on the Oak Street Campus full-time. All of their teachers are accredited kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Garber expressed concern as more grades are added to the high school the fact is those children will be of driving age. We need to weigh teenage drivers, a local park and overall parking issues when evening events occur. Residents are already cramped for parking and sometimes inconvenienced by having to park so far from their residence.

Mr. DeBlasio would like to know how many special events the school will be having so we know when there is going to be an overflow of parking. He also asked about handicap parking. Mrs. Garber said in April they have listed 16 events on their calendar which did not occur during the school day. Mr. Blust said the goal is to hold all of the events at the Dale Park School. The annex will be used for small classroom and restroom facilities while the children are working in their gardens. This is a unique experience for us to expand our offerings in the community. His foresight is having 200-300 students and then the need to find a new location outside of Mariemont. Mrs. Garber said what decision the Planning Commission makes goes beyond the few years that the Waldorf School may be in the building. In the meantime the Village may end up with a high school in an area that is very congested. The tendency is that there are more issues with a high school than an elementary school.

Ms. Davis said they could put a no driving restriction on the high school students. Many of the events in April are sign-up events which take place off campus. Mr. Blust said they want to improve their community outreach and become viewed as an asset. The message going forward is that the school cannot continue with 24 children – they will need to grow elsewhere.

Mr. Vianello said with the need for handicap parking the Waldorf actually has four parking spaces. They also reference public off street parking spaces at the Ann Buntin Becker Park. He said for clarification there are not 18 spots there – there are 13. There are 13 on the other side of the park but those are used by people who live in the area because the fire trucks cannot get through if they park on the street. The parking spaces by the church are for the church.

Mrs. Garber said with respect to the 500' she referred to section 151.089(I)(1)(a)(b)(6). She interprets that to mean you can satisfy off street parking requirements provided they are within 500' but it is either under your ownership or under a lease. The public parking is not under lease. Mr. Blust asked if it was possible to lease them. Mrs. Garber said that is public parking for the residents who live there – no.

Ms. Schwartz said she lives on Chestnut and when she drives by when the school is in session often times there are many spots open in the parking lot but there is not one open public parking spot. It would seem to her if they were good neighbors you would tell the staff of the school that they cannot park there. They need to fill every place in the parking lot before the public parking is utilized. It is a problem. Ms. Gray said they have addressed the issue and instructed the faculty to park in the parking lot so there are more spaces for the residents to park in the street. Ms. Davis said prior to purchasing and moving into Dale Park the current administrator had many meetings with Mayor Policastro and the faculty were told at that time that we were to leave the parking lot available for public parking and we were to find public parking somewhere else. After the last public meeting we came together to figure out what to do because it was conflicting information. She said perhaps Ms. Schwartz had not yet seen the difference but they are going to continue to monitor it.

Mayor Policastro said parking is a huge issue and he constantly is getting complaints. In the past when we had problems he suggested that the school use their parking lot and if that becomes full to go by the tennis courts. It irritates people when the faculty parks on the street in front of their houses and this appears to add more parking problems.

Mr. Vianello said there are three businesses at the old square which will need parking spaces in front of their businesses. His recommendation is to use the parking pads on Murray Avenue which are underutilized during the day. Mr. Blust said these are all great ideas and he wants to work as a community to resolve. We are asking for a variance on the current situation and do not believe it will bring that many more cars. He said they can put in the charter that the high school students cannot drive to school. He sees the area as a use for their school to use as a restroom for the children who are working in the gardens as well. There are a lot of spots open during the day around the park. He would be happy to pay someone to take pictures. The high school area will be too small to be used for events – everything will take place at Dale Park.

Mrs. Gaber asked about physical education and the fact that high schoolers play sports. Mr. Blust said most of those activities are handled off site. Ms. Gray said currently they team with Good Shepherd who has the necessary facilities. They will not be building a baseball field etc. They may use the field at Dale Park if permission is granted. Ms. Davis said currently for next year the only league sports that we have planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade is volleyball and that will take place in the gym. We do not have enough students to make up a team. Mr. Blust said the

children are also allowed to sign up to play sports in the district that the school is in or in the school district that they live in.

Mrs. Garber with respect to the two parking spots on the property one would be a handicap parking space and one would not be. She asked if there was enough space to have both spaces. Mr. Rich said he is not sure that there is enough exit space between the buildings and the cars. Mr. Gates said their architect indicated that there would be enough room. Mr. Rich said there are no dimensions listed. He is looking at the door swings. He said thought there is nothing in the code that prescribes what is required for parking for a school. Mr. DeBlasio said it probably would if they were building a new school. Mr. Rich said the selection of the building is really unfortunate and something the Village should consider as well because there is absolutely no use that a person could purchase this and legally meet any parking requirements that are in our zoning code. Ms. Gray said she is hopeful that the Village will see that they are trying to make changes to be good neighbors and asked that they be able to use the building for 2-3 years as a high school being cognizant of what Mr. Rich has said. She said she is hearing that people are disgruntled but they also hear a lot of positive feedback and they love it here in Mariemont. They have had positive feedback on Nextdoor Mariemont. Ms. Schwartz said those comments are not from those that live in close proximity to the Waldorf School.

Mrs. Garber said the Planning Commission has not seen any leases that the Waldorf School has for the parking. Mr. Trauth said they are going to assume the leases from the owners of the building. Mrs. Garber said that is what we are being told and a lot of leases do not agree with that provision. We have a narrative that is not signed by anyone that says we are going to be here for two years and we are going to lease etc. Mr. Trauth said the approval would be conditional upon the school producing the lease. It is the proverbial chicken or the egg.

Mr. Rich commented that the packet of information that was given to the Planning Commission members is pretty loose. He would like to see it tightened up and made to scale and made to address specific concerns. Mrs. Garber said there has been talk about five parking spaces but she is not sure that everyone agrees that is the correct number.

Mr. Blust said from what he is hearing is that a decision is not going to be made this evening and disapproval is not what they want. What he is hearing is that the Planning Commission wants confirmation on the five parking spots are real and that the Village wants the school to look for additional parking. They are going to look for additional parking even if it is not within 500'. They will get some counts on the daytime parking population of the park and address their plan and make sure that the parking spaces in the back are real. In addition, they will come up with documentation drafted up that students will not be permitted to drive to school.

Mr. Trauth said there is some green space on the side of the building. They could cut into the green space and make three more spaces. Mr. Rich said there is not enough information on the drawings. Mrs. Garber said we have to be able to get fire trucks through the area.

Mayor Policastro called a five minute recess at 6:35 p.m.

Mr. Trauth listed what the Waldorf School needs to address. (1) The number of parking spaces they have or can make available, (2) Prohibit of students driving to school (there was discussion of whether this was legal and/or feasible. The Code does not address schools. Mr. Rich said he believes the Building Commissioner gave the most liberal interpretation that he could. (3) The peak occupancy of the building, (4) how many events would be at the school at that location? Mayor Policastro said it would bring more people into that area regardless of what

structure was used. Address any sporting events. (5) Lease recorded documents for parking spaces, (6) Accurate information on the drawings

Ms. Schwartz asked if they had any plans for tables, chairs etc. for the patio area. Ms. Gray said she did not have an answer at this point but if they did they would bring it before the ARB.

It was discussed that a special meeting could be held pending the Waldorf School get the information to the Building Commissioner.

Mr. Bob Blum said most of the discussion has focused on permanent parking. The temporary parking, such as dropping off and picking up of children, creates issues with parking. The areas fill up for a certain amount of time. An example is when classes are held at the Bell Tower and parents migrate and meet there. Part of the solution needs to be that there is parking pull up/drop off. Mr. Blust said they could have the Oak Street location dismiss from the Chestnut Street location.

Ms. Marianne Schmidt, 3895 Oak Street, said she has concerns about the traffic. In the morning there are so many cars because there are no school buses. There is bumper to bumper traffic for about an hour. She does not see it improving with a high school. It does not make sense to her to move a high school in next to private residences and businesses. There will be additional activities and additional noise. This is an established neighborhood and a historic neighborhood. She does not believe that Mary Emery's vision included children coming from all over Cincinnati to go to a private school in our historic district.

Discussion ensued regarding busing. Currently 34 students are bused out of the 268 children enrolled in the elementary school.

Mr. Paul Mace said most of his concerns are safety off of Wooster Pike as traffic travels fast along Cherry Lane and Oak Street. He does have concerns about adding more students. He thinks it would be great that the students not be allowed to drive but some of the parents are not considerate. Parking is already a problem and he sees it increasing with after school events.

Ms. Jennifer Bryant, resident of Mariemont and a parent of a student at Waldorf School. She alternates between walking and driving. She has not seen a problem with the parking. She believes it has been a bit exaggerated. Documentation of the problem is key. She would not have taken her son out of Mariemont Schools and enrolled him Waldorf if she did not think the Village was an extremely responsible community. She believes some of the confusion is that people do not understand the way the curriculum works and if they did people would have more confidence in the school's ability to keep their word. She would like to see communication remain open between the school and the Village. It also supports the Mariemont economy.

Mr. Alex Peterson, resident of the Village and a Spanish teacher at the Waldorf School, said as a resident he has had his share of frustration in regards to parking. Mariemont is a very desirable place to be. For the first time the Village has a school that has a school body that are commuters from outside of the Village. He agrees safety is a concern. From his experience parents are very aware of safety. On certain event days, such as Grandparent's Day, we certainly don't want to ask them to walk several blocks. He works on scheduling for the school and he will be more than happy to work with the Village on making sure they have a comprehensive calendar of events and when they are occurring. He hopes moving forward we can be timelier, on both ends, for better communication etc. He is working internally at the school for them to be more

active and to show support and more presence in community events such as the fireworks and the Warrior Run.

Mr. Vianello said he has heard that the Waldorf School wants to be good neighbors but he is a bit skeptical because of the aesthetics at Dale Park. He has had many people stop and complain to him about how bad it looks. From a safety standpoint he has mentioned to the Mayor his concerns about the children playing in the tunnel rock wall and bridge area. It is a ten foot drop to the water and rocks below. He said something to an adult male who was supervising the children. Instead of a thank you the man replied he would take care of it. He said he continued on, stopped and watched and for ten more minutes the activity continued. It's a safety issue. The parents of children need to be aware of it and the people who are responsible for the school need to stop it and put an end to it. Do we need to put a fence up to stop people from doing it? Where the garden is behind the shed is piles of crud. He knows they make a heck of an effort at Dale Park to clean it up – the effort is noticeable. He needs some assurance that Waldorf School is going to take care of the aesthetics of the building – he would like them to think about how to treat Mariemont as a whole. Personally he has led a campaign in the neighborhood to simply say Waldorf School needs to clean stuff up. They need to get the logs off the hill that belong to the Village, they need to stay off the ballfield when it is muddy – there needs to be some common sense. He has seen some improvement and tells people that but the school has to make more than an effort, they need to make it happen.

Mr. Blust said until recently they did not know they were not being good neighbors. Actions will speak louder than words. They will come up with a formalized plan.

Ms. Victoria Manship said she is an assistant teacher at Waldorf School and she does all recess duties. One of the first things she will do is to compile recess rules which are now posted that the children are not allowed to touch the bridge. What she believes Mr. Vianello said happened after school with an afterschool teacher. She hopes he never sees it again. Mr. Vianello said he hopes he never sees it again and that it happened around 12:30 p.m.

Mrs. Garber said as a member of the community they should be a responsible citizen and make sure their own place looks nice. It should not be up to the community to point out. Mr. Blust said they will do better to raise their standards. Mrs. Garber said it might be helpful to let the Waldorf community know that there are only 2500 National Historic Landmark District in the United States. Out entire Village is a National Historic Landmark. We take it very seriously. Because this will occur in the Historic District we take it even more seriously. That is why we are asking these standards to be met.

Mayor Policastro moved, seconded by Mr. Vianello to table the matter. On roll call; seven ayes, no nays.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ms. Mary Ann Schwartz  
Secretary

