



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

Office of the Mayor

300 6th Street

605-394-4110

E-mail: mayorsoffice@rcgov.org

June 24, 2020

TO: Ms. Pauline Sumption, Finance Officer
Members of the Rapid City Common Council

During the City Council meeting held June 15th, the City Council approved a conditional use permit for a rescue mission at 112 E. North Street. I respectfully VETO this action.

The urban planning function exists to create safe and logical land uses in accordance with national, state and local standards. This function is also key to Rapid City pursuing its mission and core values.

The planning commission is the approval and enforcement arm of the municipal planning function. These non-elected, appointed members from our community possess individual and unique qualifications in helping the City come to appropriate decisions during the planning and approval process.

Cathie Harris, then president of RV Ministries in Rapid City, approached the Community Development Department in November 2019. She was questioning the feasibility of moving their mission/human service volunteer operations to 112 East North St.

Community Development advised Mrs. Harris that operating a mission on this property would require application and approval of a conditional use permit. Mrs. Harris was encouraged to apply for permit, submit their business plan and working model at which time, Community Development would evaluate the proposal. An application was not completed.

In April 2020, Community Development was informed RV ministries was continuing to pursue moving their mission operations to 112 East North St. Vicki Fisher called Cathie Harris to speak about this. Vicki cautioned against purchasing the building before the conditional use permit application was submitted and certainly prior to the application being approved.

On April 20, 2020 Code Enforcement became aware that RV Ministries was operating illegally on the property. Code Enforcement notified RV Ministries that if they wanted to operate, they would have to submit an application for a conditional use permit.

On April 24, 2020 the formal conditional use application was submitted to planning. The building ownership is listed under James 2 LLC. Mrs. Harris was advised a representative from James 2 LLC would need to sign the application. Mrs. Harris informed Vicki that James 2 LLC had authorized her to sign the application. Mrs. Harris maintained that James 2 LLC had gifted the building to RV ministries. When Community Development checked into the corporate documentation of James 2 LLC, they found that the only corporate officer was Cathie Harris. During this time, Community Development could not be



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sure they were receiving truthful information from Mrs. Harris. They received conflicting information from her, about the ownership, about the level of community support among other things. Cathie Harris soon resigned as president of RV Ministries.

The application went before the Planning Commission on May 21st. The Planning Commission received input from citizens, including the general manager of the railroad, the police department as well as comments from Community Development. The Planning Commission unanimously denied the conditional use permit based on failure to meet the criteria for allowing conditional use.

RV ministries appealed the decision to the City Council and their appeal was heard on June 15.

The Council publicly deliberated the pros and cons of a mission at this location. Among the pros were the ability to relieve some of the tremendous pressure on the Cornerstone Rescue Mission. This is a fallacy for two main reasons:

1. The mission population has decreased significantly due to social distancing related to COVID-19.
2. The proposed mission only feeds meals and provides a place to gather until either 8:00 PM or 10:00 PM, at which time the customers are sent back out into the streets.

There were other councilmember comments referring to this proposal as a solution to a problem. At the same time however, and throughout the application process both city staff, law-enforcement, a railroad official, the Community Development Department and the planning commission indicate a greater potential of a Mission at this location becoming a safety problem rather than a solution.

Further, at the June 15th Council meeting, RV Ministries spoke of their implementation plan, but in a way that was not consistent with their attached written plan. My concern is, the Council approved a plan with conditions, but the exact conditions are unknown and the record is unclear.

In short, this location is improper for what could eventually be a large, unorganized human service and social gathering place for the homeless.

The criteria to be examined for approving a conditional use are, in part:

- Pedestrian safety
- Site-specific safety
- Traffic in the area
- Adverse impacts on adjacent properties
- The safety of those benefiting from the use, in other words the customers.

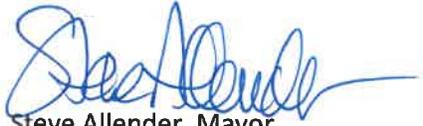
I do not believe these factors have been weighed carefully by the council, therefore I do not believe the criteria for allowing a conditional use have been met.

At the July 6th City Council meeting, this item will be placed on the agenda for reconsideration. In the meantime, you will be lobbied by citizens who will urge you to vote one way or another. I feel I must emphasize, this need not be an emotional vetting of this issue. Caring for the homeless has been a top priority of mine for the last five years as mayor, and several years prior to that as police chief. The City of Rapid City has made many improvements in the area of human services. Most importantly, we must not

allow our emotions, or the good intentions of an applicant to place other, already vulnerable people at undue risk.

I respectfully request you sustain this VETO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Allender", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Allender, Mayor
Rapid City, South Dakota