

# TIMES CHRONICLE GLENSIDE NEWS

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## Lots see lots of talk

By: Kyle Schulz , Staff Writer

**Two proposed off-site parking lots for the West Oak Lane Church of God may not be available to accommodate overflow parking, according to testimony at a Cheltenham zoning hearing May 24.**

The church is planning to use another church located on Ivy Hill Road in Springfield Township to hold 453 extra vehicles, but according to testimony from Karen Helstrom, co-president of the Elkins Park Neighbors Association, the Springfield church does not have enough parking on Sundays to accommodate its own congregation let alone any overflow parking.

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During previous testimony, representatives for the church stated there would be 387 parking spaces available after they add on to the existing parking spot. The ground for the addition is currently owned by PECO.

According to Helstrom, that ground is already set aside for the Cresheim Trail Project, which will be a bicycle trail.

A second proposed site for parking, located at John Russell Park in La Mott, is also unavailable, according to Helstrom.

The church had planned to use the parking spaces located near the Oriental Food Market along Cheltenham Avenue, but Helstrom said she had a copy of the property's deed, which indicated that parking is reserved for park use only.

Helstrom said the spaces wouldn't even be able to accommodate traffic from the church on Sundays because they are used by members of the Asian-American Adult Soccer League from 8 a.m. to noon March through August.

Marc Jonas, a representative for the church, challenged the accuracy of Helstrom's testimony, arguing much of her information regarding the Cresheim Trail was admittedly gathered from the Internet.

Jonas also called into question the authenticity of the copy of the deed for John Russell Park.

Robert Sugarman, an attorney for the Elkins Park Neighbors Association, said he will subpoena Springfield Township to verify Helstrom's testimony.

Traffic seems to be the biggest concern among residents who are worried that the proposed church will cause congestion along Ashbourne Road, while owners of the Lynnwood Gardens apartment complex are especially worried congregants will use the complex's parking spaces.

"We live in a nice quiet, peaceful area, and this is going to bring in tons and tons of cars," Helstrom said.

Following up with last month's testimony, Lee Klein, a traffic engineer and witness for the protestants, continued to testify that some aspects of previous traffic studies may be inaccurate.

According to Klein, the traffic study did not take into account special events during the week such as guest lectures, or Sunday holiday events such as Easter.

Klein also criticized early reports that estimated 100 people at most would attend weddings. Klein said he didn't understand how a 1,400 seat sanctuary would be limited to 100 wedding guests.

Testimony was also given in regard to a change of plans presented to the board just two months ago.

During testimony at the March 22 hearing, Jonas said the proposed church plans to increase the driveway width from 55 to 65 feet.

Klein testified that a wider driveway could present more danger because of the increase of traffic spilling onto Ashbourne Road, and congregants could become confused as to where they should enter and exit the site.

Pedestrians could also run a higher risk of getting hit by a vehicle as they crossed over the driveway because they would be exposed to traffic longer.

The proposed church would be located on an 8.4-acre property bordering Ashbourne Road, Washington Lane, the Cheltenham School District Administration Building and the Elkins Park Post Office.

Hearings will continue at 7:30 p.m. June 15 at Curtis Hall, Greenwood Avenue and Church Road in Wyncote.