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## Use of proposed facilities looked at

By: Lisa Beisel

**Usage of space and capacity were discussed during testimony at the Cheltenham Township zoning hearing regarding a proposal to build a large church near Ashbourne Road and Washington Lane Sept. 21.**

There was not an empty seat in Curtis Hall as the hearing for the church continued. Plans for the West Oak Lane Church of God include a 125,000-square-foot building containing a 1,333-seat sanctuary, a gymnasium, a family cinema, four bowling lanes and more. Advertisement

Three attorneys representing the groups of interest were present including Marc Jonas, representing the church, Robert Sugarman, representing the Elkins Park Neighbors Association and Michael Yanoff representing Lynnewood Gardens apartment complex.

Yanoff previously said Lynnewood Gardens is concerned about the development. He said there is potential for the church patrons to use the complex's parking as an alternative to driving to remote sites dedicated for overflow parking.

The continuance included testimony from John Turnowchyk, the architect from Hex9 Architects that assisted the church in designing the building.

Turnowchyk showed various drawings of the building as seen from different angles, as well as a floor plan, which was color-coded to indicate when each section of the building would be used.

Sunday use would be the largest and would include the sanctuary and balcony, the Christian library, the 11 adult education classrooms, the 140-seat chapel, the hospitality area, the kitchenette, the youth/toddler area and the youth ministry multipurpose room, he said.

During the weekdays, only the seniors' lounge and the administration office would be in use, he said.

Weeknights and Saturdays would see the entertainment center, the bowling lanes, the fitness center, the youth activity room and the gymnasium in use.

There are three separate entrances planned so the other parts of the building can be sealed off when not in use, Turnowchyk said.

He estimated about 500 people may be in the building during weeknight and Saturday hours.

The word "capacity" was a topic for debate. Turnowchyk used the word to describe the number of people in a given space. However, Sugarman, representing the neighbors association, tried to pinpoint whether "capacity" meant how many people would physically fit into each space, or whether that was an estimate of how many people the church would like to participate.

"What way do you have of knowing that they will not overcrowd the classrooms?" Sugarman asked.

Turnowchyk said that from the standpoint of the layout and plan, with respect to the church's program, he didn't anticipate that happening.

"That's all an architect can work with. It's the way the building is laid out," he said.

Sugarman later pointed out the plan has changed before, and implied it could change again.

Regarding the parking issue, Turnowchyk confirmed 60 percent of parking would be at off-site locations and 40 percent would be on-site.

In prior meetings, neighbors said while they do not have problems with a church being built on the property, they are concerned about the size of the church and the impact it will have on traffic and noise.

According to previous reports, the estimated cost of construction is \$10 million, although Turnowchyk could not confirm the figure.

The hearing was continued until 7:30 p.m. Nov. 10.

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