GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

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Memorandum

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: JLS for Andrew Altman, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: December 14, 2004

SUBJECT: BZA Application 17256 – Pilgrim AME Church
612 17th Street, N.E. (Square 4540, Lot 289)

APPLICATION

The application by Pilgrim AME Church (Applicant) requests a special exception review under Section 216 pursuant to 11 DCMR §3104, to operate church programs and variances from the rear yard requirement (Section 404.1) and lot occupancy requirement (Section 403.2) pursuant to 11 DCMR §3103 for an addition to the church in the R-4 Zone District.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Pilgrim AME Church provides both spiritual and social services to its members as well as to residents in the surrounding community and the proposed requests will allow them to continue their work. The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the special exception to allow church programs within a residential district and variances from the rear yard and lot occupancy requirements.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located at 612 17th Street, N.E., Square 4540, Lot 289, (Attachment 1). The property is developed with the two-story Pilgrim AME Church that has existed at this location for approximately eighty years. The church is in the Rosedale community which is a predominantly two-story, rowhouse, residential community. The church is surrounded by residences to the north, west and south. To east, across 17th Street, is the Rosedale Recreational Center. The area is zoned R-4.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The approval of the proposed special exception and variances will enable the applicant to construct a two-story addition to the existing church. The addition will be to the rear of the church and will extend to the property line eliminating the rear yard. The addition will house the offices of the church's programs that operate at 1671 Gales Street, two blocks north of the subject property. In

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conjunction with the offices, the addition will also provide space for private counseling and handicapped access into the church that is currently not available.

ANALYSIS

Pilgrim AME Church currently operates a number of church programs at 1671 Gales Street because there is not enough space within the church. Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) Order 16917, October 1, 2002 approved a special exception to operate church programs for three years at the Gales Street location. The programs include:

1. Church ministry counseling;
2. Church-related meetings, conferences, and seminars;
3. Bible study;
4. Job placement counseling;
5. Youth ministry activities;
6. Community-oriented forums; and
7. Single-day health and well-being forums and events, such as blood drives, blood pressure checks, and glaucoma screening.

In addition, variances from the on-site parking requirement and not having the church programs within a church building were also approved.

The current facility at Gales Street is a two-story structure with two offices, several small meeting rooms, and a small conference room. One of the programs that the church operates is the Job Connection Ministry that is funded and sponsored by the District of Columbia Depart of Human Services. A requirement of the sponsorship of this program is that there must be adequate facilities to accommodate the separation of the administrative functions from the areas where services are provided. If these functions are not separated, the Church stands to loose its funding which could affect the 600 persons they serve. The required separation of services cannot be accommodated in the Gales Street facility because of the limitation of space and the lack of opportunity to expand.

The second option available to the applicant is to place the offices in the existing church building. However, this is not possible because the existing space outside of the sanctuary area is quite small, open, and is utilized by the church for its many activities with only the small pastor's office available for small, private meetings. Allocation of private offices to the particular program would conflict with meeting space for the other programs.

Since the Gales Street facility and the existing church building are unable to accommodate the proposed services, the applicant has proposed an addition to the church that requires variances to make it possible. The addition to the church will also provide space to accommodate some of the private space that the church currently needs for services such as group-counseling and marriage counseling. Currently, such sessions are held in open areas without much privacy. Further, the addition will allow for the installation of elevators and provide handicapped entrances to all portions of the church.

Special Exception

Section 216 provides specific criteria under which a special exception may be granted:

216.1 Use for a program conducted by a church congregation or group of churches shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under §3104, subject to the provisions of this section.

The Job Connection Ministry will continue to be conducted by the Pilgrim AME Church.

216.2 The church program shall not be organized for profit, but shall be organized exclusively for the promotion of the social welfare of the community.

The programs operated by the church are not for profit and are exclusively for the social welfare of the members of the church and the surrounding community.

216.3 The part of the church program conducted on the property shall be carried on within the existing church building(s) or structure(s).

The existing building is unable to accommodate the existing church programs and therefore they are located off site at the Gales Street facility and it cannot accommodate the executive functions. The applicant has therefore submitted variance requests from the rear yard and lot occupancy requirements to enlarge the existing church building to house the offices.

216.4 The staff conducting, the program shall be composed of persons, at least seventy-five percent (75%) of whom volunteer their time and services.

The programs will continue to be operated out of the Gales Street facility with only the executive functions at the subject property. Overall, the church programs at Gales Street operate with a volunteer staff of over 75% and therefore meets this requirement.

216.5 The operation of the program shall be such that it is not likely to become objectionable in the Residence District because of noise and traffic.

The proposed office use will be limited to only those few persons who perform the executive functions of the program and clients of the program will not come to these offices. The space for counseling will serve persons who are currently visiting the church. Parking for the church program is provided off-site and will continue to be utilized by those who will work at the church, therefore the increase in activity at the church will be minimal and will not generate any noise and traffic that will affect the surrounding residents.

216.6 No signs or display indicating the location of the church program shall be located on the outside of the building or the grounds.

The applicant does not propose any additional signage over what is currently serving the church.

216.7 Any authorization by the Board shall be limited to a period of three (3) years, but may be renewed at the discretion of the Board.

OP recommends that the special exception be approved for three years.

Variances

In order to accommodate the proposed church program on the subject property, the applicant proposes to construct a 1,740 square feet, two-story addition to the rear of the existing church. The proposed addition will occupy the entire rear yard and therefore will not provide the required twenty feet of rear yard. The addition will increase the lot occupancy to 64% which is 4% over that permitted. The applicant is therefore seeking variances from both these requirements.

The following demonstrates how the variance requirements are met:

The property is unique by reason of its exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition;

The subject property is unique due to the exceptional situation that the existing church predates the current zoning requirement and has been at this location for approximately eighty years. The existing structure does not meet the current handicap accessibility requirements of the Building Code and can only be accommodated by an expansion of the building. Additionally, the church provides many social services to the residents of the immediate community.

By reason of the aforementioned unique or exceptional condition of the property, the strict application of the Zoning Regulations will result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties or to exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of the property.

This church building currently occupies a large portion of the lot. The rear yard is the only place on the property that can accommodate an expansion that will be compatible with the surrounding area. The strict application of the regulations would result in the church being unable to provide handicap access. Further, the addition allows for the provision of elevators to make the entire building accessible to everyone. If the addition was not permitted the church could lose sponsorship and funding for a program that serves over 600 persons.

The variance will not cause substantial detriment to the public good and will not impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.

The proposed expansion will not block the light and air of adjacent residents as neither of the residences have windows or other opening on the side that faces the rear of the church building. The addition will be of the same height as the adjacent houses and the step up towards the existing church building. The applicant meets the criteria for the special exception and therefore will not be a detriment to the public good and neither will it impair the intent of the Zoning Regulations and Map.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The application was reviewed by ANC-6A on November 30, 2004 and they recommended approval of the requested special exception and variances.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the special exception to allow church programs within a residential district and variances from the rear yard and lot occupancy requirements. Pilgrim AME Church has been a part of this community for over 78-years and provides both spiritual and social services.

ATT:

1. Zoning and Land Use Map

AA/mbr



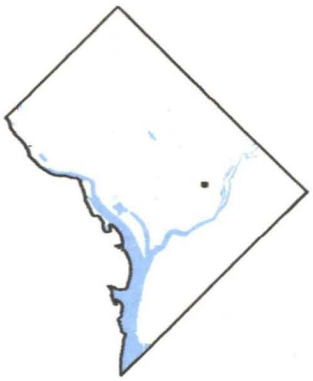
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Site Location
BZA Application #17256
Pilgrim AME Church
612 17th Street, N.E.

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Feet

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District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Office of Planning ~ SDecenber 8, 2004

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

Attachement 1