

# Hopkins House Requests Denied By Commission

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Gazette Writer

In a tie vote Tuesday night, the Alexandria Planning Commission denied the request by the Hopkins House Center for Children and Families to increase both the number of children it accommodates and its hours of operation.

J. Glenn Hopkins, President of Hopkins House, in presenting his case to the Commission said, "There is a need for additional child care in Alexandria." He was, therefore, seeking to increase the number of children at the facility from its present 49 to 55 and to extend the present closing time from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

On March 18, City Council granted a Special Use Permit (SUP), allowing Hopkins House, located at 1218-1224 Princess St., to increase the number of children at the preschool, to construct a one story building addition at 1224 Princess, and to utilize the property at 1218 Princess for preschool functions.

The new request is to provide infant and toddler care, which would increase the enrollment by six and the teaching staff by two or three. According to materials circulated by Hopkins House to neighbors this spring, enrollment was listed at 39. However, according to the new application, the enrollment is now 49.

In recommending approval of the application, staff included a condition limiting the operation to a total of 21 staff persons on site at any time" and "added a condition requiring that the applicant require its employees to use off-street parking."

Both the increase in children and

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***—J. Lawrence Robinson,  
Commissioner***

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the impact of Hopkins House personnel parking were the main elements of contention at the hearing. It was noted that all residents of the 1200 block of Princess Street had signed a petition opposing any change in the present utilization of Hopkins House as that applied to both children and staff.

During the discussion, the Com-

missioners stated that just last year Hopkins House had assured them and the neighbors that there would be no further increase from the then 39 children being served.

"Now, here we are again. When is it going to end?" asked Commissioner Donna Fossum. "What's in question here is a lot more than parking. It is the support of the community which is on the edge of collapsing right now. The community thought they had closure last year. There is a very different spirit this year."

Vice Chairman, Richard Leibach, a former Hopkins House Board member, stated, "Hopkins House has existed for years based on a good neighbor policy. I have met with the neighbors and there is not a good relationship in many cases today."

Commissioner J. Lawrence Robinson, concurred by saying, "I am concerned that we have lost that equilibrium of what we all agreed to one year ago, that 49 would be the top."

Hopkins requested that the increase in both children and staff be approved in order to allow him to progress with needed renovations while the center is at minimum use over the summer. He suggested the parking situation be studied over the summer to determine if there is

a problem. Otherwise the changes would be delayed for a year.

Commissioner John Komoroske, moved that the Commission recommend approval with the conditions that the staff conduct a parking survey over the summer and subject to other staff conditions as noted in their report. Voting for the motion were Chairman Eric Wagner, Commissioners Ludwig Gaines and Komoroske. In opposition were Vice Chairman Leibach and Commissioners Fossum and Robinson.

Commissioner H. Stewart Dunn, Jr., recused himself from the discussions and vote because he serves as a Hopkins House Trustee. This brought about the tie vote which means that the application will be sent to City Council without recommendation.

## **In other action, the Commission:**

■ Approved a request by the Alexandria Public Schools for consideration of a development site plan for construction of a 56,000-square-foot building addition at the George Washington Middle School. It will provide additional classrooms, a new library/media center and auxiliary

gymnasium. The plan also calls for revised site traffic circulation and relocated parking. The total cost is projected to be \$10 million. The new additions would increase the total school size from its present 182,000-square-feet to 238,000-square feet or 2.5 percent. Enrollment is forecast to increase from 1,046 to 1,500 with faculty going from the present 147 to 202.

■ Approved a request for a reduction in off-street parking for the North Point Center at 800-840 N. Henry St. The applicant, On-Site Sourcing, a publicly traded company that provides outsourcing services related to documents, data and office management, has purchased the site and intends to move its operations from its current Rosslyn location. The applicant had the support of the Northeast Civic Association. They also have agreed to reimburse each employee \$50 who commutes to work by public transportation. The site now contains 134 parking spaces, but only 68 of those meet current parking requirements. Another 65 striped spaces are substandard by today's requirements. The applicant requested the total requirement be reduced to the current 68 meeting specifications.