

MINUTES
CITY OF DARIEN
MUNICIPAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 26, 2026

PRESENT: Alderman Thomas Belczak – Chairman, Alderman Ted Schauer, Alderman Ralph Stompanato

ABSENT: None

OTHERS: Mr. Dan Gombac – Director, Mr. Ryan Murphy – City Planner

Establish Quorum

Chairperson Thomas Belczak called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the City of Darien City Hall, 1702 Plainfield Road, Darien, Illinois. Chairperson Belczak declared a quorum present.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

- i. 2224 Donegal Drive (PIN 10-05-201-078) – Request for approval of a variation pursuant to Section 7-5-1(C) of the City Code to allow fencing of only the portion of the rear yard immediately surrounding and associated with the chicken coop enclosure, rather than requiring fencing of the entire rear yard perimeter.**

Mr. Ryan Murphy, City Planner, reported that the variation would be under the chicken regulations, that the code would require a perimeter fence in the rear yard, but the resident had requested only a portion be screened. He reported that the yard is large and the coop is small, and would be located behind a brick patio. He further reported that staff felt the justification would comply fully with the variation checklist, and that he had not received any public comment on the issue.

Chairperson Belczak questioned if the fence would comply with height and privacy issues.

Mr. Murphy confirmed that it would, and that the resident had complied with previous complaints.

Alderman Stompanato made a motion, seconded by Alderman Schauer to approve 2224 Donegal Drive (PIN 10-05-201-078) – Request for approval of a variation pursuant to Section 7-5-1(C) of the City Code to allow fencing of only the portion of the rear yard immediately

surrounding and associated with the chicken coop enclosure, rather than requiring fencing of the entire rear yard perimeter.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- j. **2208 Carlow Drive (PIN 10-05-202-045) – Request for approval of variations pursuant to Section 7-5-1(C) of the City Code to allow reduced setbacks and alternative screening measures for a proposed chicken coop, permitting the structure to be located adjacent to an existing accessory structure and screened through landscaping in lieu of a required privacy fence.**

Mr. Murphy reported that code enforcement had spoken to the property owner, that the existing coop was 20 feet away from the east property line, and the resident had recently put a pool in. He reported that in lieu of a fence, they would like to put in six-foot arborvitaes, as well as a combination of screening and a reduction to the required setback.

Chairperson Belczak questioned where the arborvitaes would be and where it would be blocked off.

The petitioner stated that he used AI to create an image of the yard, which he shared with the Committee. He stated that he has a shed, a pool, and a wrought iron fence around the yard, and that he has put a lot of money into the property so he wants to ensure everything is up to code. He further stated that the way his property is angled, even with a six-foot fence the building is still present.

Mr. Dan Gombac, Director, suggested that the Committee may make a condition about the planting requirements.

Chairperson Belczak questioned if the arborvitaes would prevent the chickens from roaming in the yard, and how they would stay in the run.

The petitioner stated that there would be a mesh screened run and a gate into the coop.

Alderman Ted Schauer questioned if the chickens would ever get out of the screened area.

The petitioner stated that they would not.

Chairperson Belczak stated that there was nothing on the proposed photo showing how the chickens would be blocked off.

The petitioner stated that there would be an 8X8 run covered by mesh wiring. He stated that the run would be attached to the shed, which would be part coop for the chickens to sleep in.

Alderman Schauer stated that as long as the chickens don't get out in the yard, it would be okay.

Mr. and Mrs. Alan and Vicki Garringer stated that they are the neighbors to the east of the petitioner, and they are in full support of him. They stated that they wouldn't be able to see or hear the chickens, and it would be worse if there was a privacy fence. They further stated that the neighbor to the west would be able to see over the top of a six-foot fence.

Mr. Dennis Johnson, the neighbor to the west, stated that from his patio, the chicken coop would dominate his view of the neighborhood, and if it were up to him, there would be no coops in Darien. He requested that since the city approved chicken coops without individual circumstances in mind, that they apply those rules. He stated that the swales in the backyard would help with the smell and the sound, and would help the fence obstruct some of the view, but where the fence would go on the property line would basically be in a ditch, so it would take off two to three feet off the top of the fence. Mr. Johnson stated that a nine-foot fence would also not look good, so they would be choosing between bad options.

Alderman Ralph Stompanato questioned if the eight-foot arborvitaes would do a better job at blocking Mr. Johnson's view.

Mr. Johnson stated that arborvitaes tend to die in the swale.

Alderman Stompanato questioned if they would go where the fence would be or closer to the chicken coop.

Mr. Gombac stated that they would be by the chicken coop.

Alderman Stompanato stated that the full height would cover the coop.

Mr. Johnson stated that if they were to survive, it would be fine.

Alderman Stompanato stated that they would plant six to eight-foot arborvitaes from the start.

Mr. Gombac stated that the crisscross pattern of planting would block out the shed/coop/run. He stated that they would meet with the resident to work out the details, and that they could make a condition to run with the chicken coop, and if the arborvitaes were to die, the petitioner would be in violation of the special use.

There was some further conversation about hiding chicken coops from view.

Mr. Gombac stated that pending the Committee's recommendation, they would meet with the petitioner and get a drawing and agreement from a landscape architect.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would refer to the Council's judgement, and that he would not want to see or hear the chickens.

Chairperson Belczak stated that the petitioner should provide some mapping of the coop to provide the City Council.

Mr. Murphy added that he should also include photos.

There was some discussion regarding addressing the petition at City Council.

Mr. Gombac clarified for the petitioner that they would work with him to resolve any issues prior to the City Council meeting.

Alderman Schauer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Stompanato to approve 2208 Carlow Drive (PIN 10-05-202-045) – Request for approval of variations pursuant to Section 7-5-1(C) of the City Code to allow reduced setbacks and alternative screening measures for a proposed chicken coop, permitting the structure to be located adjacent to an existing accessory structure and screened through landscaping in lieu of a required privacy fence with the following condition:

- 1. Contingency for arborvitaes per landscape architect that will run with the chicken coop/property**

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

Mr. Murphy stated that he would follow up with the petitioner.

- h. PZC-26-7 (Special Use) – Petition from the Society of Mount Carmel for approval of a special use permit to utilize the single family home located at 8825 Robert Road, Darien, IL 60561 (PIN 10-05-207-015) as a rectory/residential use for approximately three to four priests, brothers, or other religious occupants. The Property is located within the R-2 Single Family Residence District.**

Mr. Murphy reported that the petition would be for a special use for a six-bedroom home, and that staff would not dictate which members occupy a religious order. He reported that they would be required to receive a special use due to two sections of the code, which would allow religious institutions in a residential area. He further reported that the definition for a family is not applicable to use, and noted that the proposed would be a private residence with no impacts. Mr. Murphy reported that approval would not waive compliance with the code, and that a religious land-use law would require the review to be focused to use and external impacts rather than identity or role of the occupants. He reported that the petitioner had updated their letter responding to some comments, and offered the special use to be tied to the property ownership. He further reported that the city attorney stated it would only be enforceable if the right was waived by the petitioner.

Mr. Murphy explained that the public hearing sign had been taken down after the first hearing, but was put back up shortly after in order to comply with ordinance.

Mr. Gombac added that city ordinance says the sign must stay up during the whole process. He further reported that the city attorney was on the phone, and requested that he explain special uses under Illinois case law and how Illinois applies special use standards.

City Attorney John Murphey stated that there was a presentation with the same kinds of questions regarding Gerber back in 2023, which he included in his memo to the Committee. He

stated that generally speaking, special uses are presumably permitted unless the nature of the special use is unusual. He gave the example of a church being built without enough parking, that this would be a presumably permitted special use unless there was something unusual and the staff report indicates that there isn't anything of that nature. Attorney Murphey further stated that in Illinois case law, the term necessary would mean it is a reasonable land use. He stated that the comments about tax impacts had been previously discussed at a Joint Review Board meeting for Chestnut Court, in which it had been stated that any property tax impact would be so minimal, a tax-exempt property would hardly have a measurable impact on the city or its taxpayers. He further stated that since the City Council determined that religious uses would be allowed, they have the right to a tax-exemption. Attorney Murphey cited a case in River Forest, in which it was deemed against public policy to deny a zoning application due to real or perceived burden. He reiterated that the term necessary would pertain to the reasonableness of the land use, and that from a language, practice, and policy standpoint, tax-exemption of a property is not an appropriate consideration for a zoning petition. Attorney Murphey stated that ordinarily, special uses run with the land, but if the applicant were to waive their rights, they would be able to provide a condition in approval of the ordinance.

Mr. Gombac brought up the ambiguous number of residents in the subject property, questioning how many people they would allow.

Attorney Murphey stated that it would be hard to enforce, but that would be up to the Committee.

Chairperson Belczak questioned if it would be appropriate to limit it to the number of bedrooms.

Attorney Murphey confirmed that that would be a logical, reasonable restriction.

The phone call with Attorney Murphey was cut off.

Mr. Michael Garrigan, Vasselli Law and representative of the petitioner, stated that they concur with staff and Attorney Murphey's analysis, and that they want to remain sensitive to the residents of the single-family neighborhood. He stated that the Carmelites would address resident concerns by including stipulations in the special use to waive it as well as keep parking limited to the premises. He further stated that the property would remain a single-family home and that they want to be good neighbors.

Chairperson Belczak questioned if they would be okay with the stipulation to limit the number of residents.

Mr. Garrigan stated that they would be okay with limiting it to the maximum number of rooms.

Mr. Gombac clarified that there are six bedrooms in the house.

Mr. Brian Nigohosian, resident of Tara Hill, stated that Tara Hill is zone R-2 and full of single-family homes, and that this had nothing to do with the occupants. He stated that he spoke at

the PZC meeting, who turned down the petition, and that this is one of the most expensive homes in Darien. He further stated that this would be inconsistent with similar homes in the neighborhood, and that it was far from the church, and they could have built on the vacant lot on Bailey Road. Mr. Nigohosian stated that they were shifting the burden onto property owners, that it was misleading, and there will be financial impact. He stated that he has not heard of any discussion with the taxing bodies, and that not agreeing to waive the tax-exemption would cause the community to eat the cost. He further stated that there was no benefit to the neighborhood, there was no study on a decrease in value, and that the special use was not necessary. Mr. Nigohosian stated that the petition would impede development, and it would not be a rectory but a retirement home.

Ms. Laurie Jopeak, resident of Tara Hill, stated that she had given a letter opposing the zoning, the way it was worded, and the timing. She stated that the proposed would permit transient occupants and could turn into an Airbnb. She further stated the city approval seems pre-approved, and the PZC seemed hesitant, giving no recommendation. Ms. Jopeak stated that there was favoritism for the petitioner, that there were no concerns for the lack of approval, and that it should not be taken lightly. She stated that they should include the residents in approval and the petition should not be rushed.

Mr. Rich Hauser, resident of Tara Hill, stated that he agreed with Ms. Jopeak that the petition was pushed fast and vague, and asked for a change with implications down the road. He stated that this would only benefit the Carmelites, not the community. He further stated that the city should understand what they are approving, and that they should consider what they would think if the proposed was next to their home.

Father David McEvoy stated the he has lived at the Winterberry home for six years, and that the men of the order provide services to the community. He stated that they receive many visitors to the retreat center, museum and shrine, and have an international headquarters. He further stated that they have a need for housing both active and retired men, and that they have been good neighbors at the Winterberry property.

Mr. Ryan Anderson, Director of Facilities for the Society of Mount Carmel, stated that the house was in bad shape, so they have been doing numerous repairs. He stated that it is not an Airbnb, and that they had looked at other properties, but this one worked best and they wanted to stay in Darien.

A member of the audience questioned where the various visitors would stay.

Mr. Anderson stated that the visitors go to the church campus, not to the private residences.

Another resident from the Tara Hill neighborhood stated that this would impact him directly as he lives next door. He stated that he has a family and wants similar family principles, nothing against the religion. He further stated that he is afraid of the impact to the value of the house,

that people may turn away from buying the house, so if he doesn't get the price he deserves, he would go to another religious institution to sell to.

Chairperson Belczak stated that a rectory is a reasonable land use, and there isn't anything telling him they are not entitled to it.

Alderman Stompanato stated that it was made clear at PZC that there would be no people coming and going from the property. He stated that they would just need to clean up the number of people, but there was no reason to deny the special use for a residence in a residential area.

Alderman Schauer recalled a situation with the Opus Dei community, in which similar issues were brought up but didn't transpire. He stated that he understands where the residents are coming from, but there isn't enough to not approve the petition.

There was some discussion regarding the conditions to the motion.

Alderman Stompanato made a motion, seconded by Alderman Schauer to approve PZC-26-7 (Special Use) – Petition from the Society of Mount Carmel for approval of a special use permit to utilize the single family home located at 8825 Robert Road, Darien, IL 60561 (PIN 10-05-207-015) as a rectory/residential use for approximately three to four priests, brothers, or other religious occupants. The Property is located within the R-2 Single Family Residence District, with the following conditions:

- 1. That the special use be limited to the ownership, not the land, and**
- 2. That the maximum capacity be limited to the number of bedrooms, to be maintained as six bedrooms.**

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- a. Motion – Approving to extend and execute a contract with Compass Minerals America, Inc., for the purchase of rock salt in an amount not to exceed \$196,825.84.**
- b. Motion – Authorizing the Mayor to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with Center Cass School District #66 for the reimbursement of Rock Salt through the City's 2026/27 Rock Salt Agreement.**
- c. Motion – Authorizing the Mayor to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Darien Park District for the reimbursement of Rock Salt through the City's 2026/27 Rock Salt Agreement.**

Mr. Gombac reported that they had estimated rock salt quantities for next year, and that Compass would know what to expect. He reported that this would be part of a co-op agreement with DuPage County, and that it would take 2,600 tons of salt to refill the dome. He further reported that the IGAs with the park district and the school district would be to provide salt to them.

There was some discussion regarding the repairs to the salt shed.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Schauer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Stompanato approving to extend and execute a contract with Compass Minerals America, Inc., for the purchase of rock salt in an amount not to exceed \$196,825.84, authorizing the Mayor to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with Center Cass School District #66 for the reimbursement of Rock Salt through the City's 2026/27 Rock Salt Agreement, and authorizing the Mayor to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Darien Park District for the reimbursement of Rock Salt through the City's 2026/27 Rock Salt Agreement.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- d. Motion – Authorizing the Private Property Rear Storm Water Management Assistance Projects and the Farmingdale Drive and the Sawyer Drive and the Wildwood Court Public Works Storm Sewer Projects in an amount not to exceed \$142,193.**

Mr. Gombac reported that these would be the projects for the year up to date, with both resident and city participation. He reported that some of these areas need infrastructure, easements, and require road repairs to provide better drainage. He further reported that he has been negotiating with the builder, and prior to plat approval, there would be a joint co-op from the developer.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Stompanato made a motion, seconded by Alderman Schauer authorizing the Private Property Rear Storm Water Management Assistance Projects and the Farmingdale Drive and the Sawyer Drive and the Wildwood Court Public Works Storm Sewer Projects in an amount not to exceed \$142,193.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- e. Motion – Accepting a quote from National Wash Authority LLC, for the pressure washing services for the City's potable water tanks at a cost not to exceed \$26,700.**

Mr. Gombac reported that they try to do every three years and inspect the inside for any rust, then make any repairs as needed.

There was some discussion regarding the life of the water tower.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Schauer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Stompanato accepting a quote from National Wash Authority LLC, for the pressure washing services for the City's potable water tanks at a cost not to exceed \$26,700.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- f. Motion – Accepting a proposal from Precision Pavement Marking, Inc., at the proposed unit prices, in an amount not to exceed \$16,000.00 for the 2026 Road Striping Program.**

Mr. Gombac reported that this would be a small contract that usually goes under MFT for miscellaneous striping of center lanes, stop bars, cross walks, etc. He reported that this was a DuPage County initiative with multiple municipalities.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Stompanato made a motion, seconded by Alderman Schauer accepting a proposal from Precision Pavement Marking, Inc., at the proposed unit prices, in an amount not to exceed \$16,000.00 for the 2026 Road Striping Program.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- g. Motion – Accepting a Drainage Easement from the following properties: 6714 Tennessee Ave – PIN 09-22-403-014 and 6718 Tennessee Ave – PIN 09-22-403-015.**

Mr. Gombac reported that the residents for the project would need an easement of about five feet on each side constructed to maintain the area.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Stompanato made a motion, seconded by Alderman Schauer accepting a Drainage Easement from the following properties: 6714 Tennessee Ave – PIN 09-22-403-014 and 6718 Tennessee Ave – PIN 09-22-403-015.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

- k. Minutes – April 27, 2026 Municipal Services Committee**

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Alderman Schauer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Stompanato to approve the April 27, 2026 Municipal Services Committee Meeting Minutes.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 3-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Gombac reported that they were waiting on ComEd for the Plainfield wall project, and that the lanes would be blocked on Cass and Plainfield for about a month during construction, but there would be good alternatives.

He reported that the Shell on Cass would be done around the end of July or early August.

He reported that they were conducting soil coring for potential remediation.

Next Scheduled Meeting

Chairperson Belczak announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 22, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Committee, Alderman Schauer made a motion, seconded by Alderman Stompanato to adjourn. Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, and the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

X

Thomas Belczak
Chairman

X

Ted Schauer
Alderman

X

Ralph Stompanato
Alderman