

City Of Edwardsville Officials Clarify Position on Overnight Warming Location Operation

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EDWARDSVILLE – The City is asking the organizers of an overnight warming location in Edwardsville to apply for a special use permit to operate as a means of ensuring the safety of all involved. City officials have been communicating for months with the organizers of an overnight warming location at 534 St. Louis Street to help them navigate zoning processes that would apply to many property uses in that zoning district, including an overnight warming facility.

City officials have made ongoing attempts since October to provide guidance on the applicable requirements and even hosted a meeting in early December between the overnight warming center organizers and concerned residents in the hopes of furthering understanding and communication. The City is not asking anything of the overnight warming location organizers that would not be required for any property use that falls outside of Edwardsville's zoning guidelines. It is the City's stance that a special use permit is necessary for the overnight warming location to continue operating at 534 St. Louis Street, which is within the MU-1 Downtown Mixed Use zoning district.

A special use permit would be applicable for any hotel, overnight warming location, adult or child day care facilities or other such uses that are not specifically included in this zoning district, and helps to ensure appropriate life safety measures and operations are in place. A special use permit request entails a public hearing before the Zoning Board of Appeals, where the organizers could detail their plans and members of the public could comment.

The Zoning Board of Appeals would issue a recommendation that then would be subject to City Council approval. On October 26, City officials shared this guidance with the overnight warming location organizers. On that day, City Administrator Kevin Head and other City representatives attended a Glen-Ed Ministerial Alliance meeting to gain a better understanding of the overnight warming location plans. The City provided the special use permit application, the timeline for submission to enable it to be heard as quickly as possible.

The City administrator also offered to waive the application fee if it was submitted prior to a November 13 deadline to be addressed at a subsequent Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. Despite the City's repeated efforts to work with the operators, the City has yet to receive a special use permit application. The citation that was sent to First Baptist Church on December 19 came only after the second activation of the overnight warming location and in the absence of a special use permit application.

The overnight warming location organizers notified the City in writing just in the past few days, on Thursday, January 11, that they do not plan to apply for a special use permit. The City has a long history of support for social service efforts and organizations that benefit the Edwardsville community and would welcome additional initiatives. City officials encourage the overnight warming location organizers to work with the City as a way to ensure safe, appropriate operation of any such facility.

Any fines that could be incurred as a result of continued unauthorized operation are at the discretion of the Municipal Court, which presides over hearings involving the City.

During this period of extremely low temperatures, the City also will open the lobby of the Public Safety Building, 333 S. Main Street, for those who need overnight shelter from the cold.