

To: Land Use Committee, City of Newton

From: Dahlia Rudavsky, on behalf of the Centre Street Minyan

Re: Special Permit Application: Waiver of 5 Parking Stalls at 858 Walnut Street

Date: March 11, 2022

Honorable Members of the Land Use Committee:

I write as representative of the Centre Street Minyan ("CSM"), which proposes to use portions of an existing 8779 square foot building located at 858 Walnut Street as a religious institution (synagogue). Although I am an attorney, I am presenting this Application as a member of CSM.

The Centre Street Minyan is not a traditional synagogue. We are a lay-led group of approximately 110 households. We have no staff or paid clergy, no religious school, no day care facility, and no plans to add any of these. During the past 20 years, we have met at Hebrew College under the name Newton Centre Minyan. When Hebrew College sold its building in 2020, the Newton Centre Minyan had to find a new home. About half of our group chose to join Temple Emanuel. The remaining group, renamed CSM, chose to remain independent. We are now planning to move to the building located at 858 Walnut St.

Since its founding 40 years ago, our minyan has focused almost exclusively on meeting for prayer services on Saturday mornings and Jewish holidays. Typically, some 70 members attend CSM's services. Many members adhere to the traditional practice of refraining from driving on the Sabbath and holidays, instead walking (or biking) to services. Beyond those who walk for religious reasons, many others live less than a mile from 858 Walnut and will also likely walk.

PARKING NEEDS

There is some parking on site at 858 Walnut Street. According to the Zoning Review Memorandum (attached), CSM will need a waiver of 5 parking stalls beyond what is available on site for CSM's use. To address this need, CSM has arranged with the tenant of 860 Walnut Street, Siegel Associates, which shares the parking lot associated with both buildings, to use his 5 dedicated off-street stalls, which that tenant does not use on weekends. See the attached letter from Siegel Associates.

CSM plans to remain at Hebrew College through the fall 2022 High Holidays. Beginning in the fall of 2023, CSM expects to hold our High Holiday services at 858 Walnut Street. Fewer than 10 times per year, because of High Holiday or other holiday observances or the occasional bar or bat mitzvah celebration, a larger-than-usual number of people may attend. CSM will encourage carpooling on those occasions. In addition, CSM will encourage its members to park a short walk away on major thoroughfares, and to avoid parking in the adjacent residential neighborhood.

There is plentiful parking on major streets nearby. Along Walnut Street in front of City Hall, there are 22 parking spots that are typically available on Saturday mornings. In addition, other spaces are available on Homer Street, and on weekends on City Hall Drive. We are confident that by directing members and guests to these available parking spots, in addition to the off-street stalls that will generally be available, CSM will ensure that its parking needs on these occasions will not unduly burden the adjacent residential neighborhood.

We have communicated with the neighbors, including hosting two meetings in 2020 (when our group was nearly twice the size) to explain our plans and to hear their concerns. We plan to continue this dialogue with the neighborhood, both during the application period and after we commence occupancy, in order to assure a harmonious relationship.

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

As a religious institution, CSM takes the position that its project is allowed as a matter of right, and that neither a special permit under Section 4.1.2.B.1 nor a site plan review under Section 3.1.2.B.2 is required. CSM reserves its rights as to both provisions.

ATTACHMENTS

Attached please find the following documents in connection with CSM's application:

1. Special Permit Application;
2. Zoning Review Memorandum dated November 9, 2021;
3. Site (Plot) Plan;
4. Parking Layout sketch;
5. Architectural Rendering of Proposed Use—main floor;
6. Architectural Rendering—lower level;
7. Explanation of Parking Management Plan from 2020;
8. Parking Management Plan dated September 9, 2020 (prepared for Newton Centre Minyan, when a larger membership was expected);
9. Letter from Siegel Associates dated November 30, 2021 regarding use of 5 parking stalls.

The filing fee of \$ 750 has been separately submitted.