

Land Use Application – 5-24- 2019

Property Location

All of Government Lot 4 in Section 9, Township 29 north, Range 21 west, City of Lake Elmo, Washington County, Minnesota, according to government survey containing 59.4 acres of land. Also the south 30.6 acres of Government Lot 4 in Section 4, and of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of said Section 4, all in Township 29 north, Range 21 west, according to government survey, being the south 688 feet thereof.

Detailed Reason for the Request

In December of 1991, the City of Lake Elmo approved the master plan of the Carmelite Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin Mary (aka Carmel of the Blessed Virgin Mary). The master plan included a phasing plan of four parts. Phase 1, consisting of a community building and garage was constructed in 1991/92. Phase 2, consisting of a central court yard with covered walkways (cloister) was constructed in 2001/2002. Phase 3 consists of a chapel and is the building we would now like to construct. Phase 4 will consist of a guest building and library. We hope to commence Phase 4 around 2022. We request City approval of a conditional use permit to construct our chapel because it is an essential building of every monastery and will provide needed worship space for the members of the Hermitage and their guests.

Variance Requests

No variances requested.

2a. Contact Information

Owner of Record

Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Saint Paul
8251 Demontreville Trail
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
651-777-3882

Authorized Agent

Reverend John Burns
Carmelite Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin Mary
8249 Demontreville Trail
Lake Elmo, MN 55042
651-779-7351
carmelbvm@gmail.com

Architect

Duncan Stroik
218 West Washington Avenue
Suite 1200
South Bend, IN 46601
574-232-1783
stroik@stroik.com

Civil Engineer

Paul Cherne, P.E.
Pioneer Engineering

2422 Enterprise Drive
 Mendota Heights, MN 55120
 651-251-0630
pcherne@pioneereng.com

Surveyor

Joel Anez
 Landmark Surveying, Inc.
 21070 Olinda Trail North
 Box 65
 Scandia, MN 55073
 651-433-3421
inthefield@frontiernet.net

Septic System

Jesse Kloeppner
 Steinbrecher Companies, Inc.
 Zimmerman, MN 55398
 763-843-4114
septic@IssiMN.com

2b. Property Information

Addresses

Disalced Carmelite Nuns of St. Paul
 8251 Demontreville Trail
 Lake Elmo, MN 55042

Carmelite Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 8249 DeMontreville Trail
 Lake Elmo, MN 55042

Current Zoning

Public Facility (PF)

Parcel Size

90.109 acres
 3,924,760 square feet

PID

0902921120002

Current Legal Description

All of Government Lot 4 in Section 9, Township 29 north, Range 21 west, City of Lake Elmo, Washington County, Minnesota, according to government survey containing 59.4 acres of land. Also the south 30.6 acres of Government Lot 4 in Section 4, and of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of said section 4, all in Township 29 north, Range 21 west, according to government survey, being the south 688 feet thereof.

2c. History of the Property

The property under consideration was homesteaded in the 1800s and remained farm land until 1954. At one time William Jennings was owner of all of Lot 4, Section 9, Township 29, Range 21, and all of Lots 3 and 4 and the West one-half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 4, Township 29, Range 21, West in Washington County, Minnesota.

On 25 August 1904, William Jennings and his wife conveyed to Christian Figge by warranty deed dated that day, Government Lot 4, Section 9, Township 29, Range 21, and also the South 30.6 acres of Lot 4 in Section 4 and of the Southwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 4, Township 29, Range 21. As part of said conveyance, William Jennings also granted to Christian Figge a right of way (easement) to Figge's property over Government Lots 3 and 4 in Section 4 as described in a deed recorded in Book 72 of the Book of Deeds, page 80, Washington County, Minnesota. This is the easement from Demontreville Trail across property now owned by the Jesuit Retreat House and to the property under consideration that has existed since 1904.

In 1954, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Saint Paul, a non-profit corporation under the laws of the State of Minnesota, were looking for property upon which to build a permanent monastery. They were advised of the property which they now own and entered into negotiations with the current owners.

On 2 February 1954, Phillip C. Mackey and his wife Bernadine R. Mackey conveyed their property, along with its easement, to the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Saint Paul by warranty deed, dated that day, and filed for record in Washington County, Minnesota, on 4 February 1954. At the time of purchase, said property had been on the market for five years. The Carmelite Nuns built their monastery upon their newly acquired property in 1954/55. They moved into the new monastery in 1955 and have resided there since that time.

In 1983, Rev. John Burns, a Carmelite priest, became chaplain for the Carmelite Nuns in Lake Elmo. After several years, the Carmelite Nuns and Fr. Burns mutually agreed that it would be beneficial to the Carmelite nuns if the Carmelite Fathers and Brothers established their own monastery on the property. This would assure the nuns of future chaplains and allowed the Carmelite Fathers to have a presence in the Twin Cities. In 1987 Carmel of the Blessed Virgin Mary (aka Carmelite Hermitage, Carmelite Hermitage of the Blessed Virgin Mary) was incorporated in the State of Minnesota. Other priests and brothers joined the community over the years.

The Order of Carmelites was founded on Mount Carmel (present State of Israel) sometime before 1200 AD. From there it has spread to six continents. Currently there are about 900 monasteries of nuns with a total membership of 10,000, and 1,000 houses of Carmelite priests and brothers with about a total membership of 6,000. We are part of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our way of life consists of prayer, study, and labor to support ourselves. We also welcome visitors who wish to find a quiet place to refresh their minds and hearts, to reflect and pray, either by themselves or with us, and who may desire to seek guidance for their lives by talking with one of the members of our community. The chapel is the heart of our monastery buildings. Our day is punctuated by liturgical services and times of personal prayer. We live a simple way of life and support ourselves through arts and crafts, organic gardening, maple syrup production, woodworking and self-maintenance of our property and buildings.

2d, i.

The 90 acre tract upon which the new chapel will be built is approximately 60% woodland and 40% prairie and is situated on the east bank of Lake Demontreville. Wildlife is abundant in all areas of the property. We have a personal commitment to live in harmony with our natural surroundings and to employ horticultural practices which do not pollute but rather benefit the environment. We have spent many hours removing buckthorn and diseased trees from our property and planting species of trees and shrubs which are beneficial to wildlife.

The new chapel will be situated just west of the existing buildings of the Hermitage. The land there is almost flat, and construction of the chapel will not require any significant changes to the topography. The hermitage is situated in an open field surrounded by woodlands. The area in the immediate vicinity of the hermitage is planted with lawn, trees, shrubs, and flower beds. Access to the hermitage is provided by a private road from Demontreville Trail. The distance between the hermitage and Demontreville Trail is approximately ½ mile.

Since we live at the Hermitage, and since our way of life is relatively secluded, we leave the Hermitage infrequently, and therefore we do not generate a significant amount of traffic. Visitors to our Hermitage now average 1-2 per day. Additionally, we have regular mail delivery and occasional deliveries by UPS or FedEx. Our new chapel will be open to the public during the day and may generate an increased number of visitors. Because of the remoteness of our property and the fact that we do not advertise, we do not anticipate an increase of visitors beyond an average of 10-15 per day. We do not operate any programs for the public, although we may have a special celebration a few times per year to which guests are invited. We do not anticipate any adverse effects upon the natural areas of our property during or after the construction of the chapel.

2d, ii.

We currently have seven members in our community, and we may eventually grow to a maximum of twelve members. We have two part-time employees who help to maintain our grounds and buildings. The Hermitage opens to the public at 7:30 AM and closes at 4:30 PM. We have a gate which prevents access to the hermitage after-hours.

Our community building provides living and work spaces for the members of the community, including a kitchen, dining room, laundry, shower room, library, infirmary, and mechanical room. To the west of the community building and attached to it lies the cloister. This consists of a quadrangle surrounded by covered walkways which allow passage from one building to another under a roof. The open interior of the cloister is landscaped with flowerbeds and a pool. Off the north and south sides of the cloister are found the bedrooms of the members of the community. The new chapel will be situated just west of the cloister. The chapel will be used for liturgical services and for personal prayer. It has a planned seating capacity of 42 guests, in addition to the members of our community (12 maximum).

2e, i.

Since the parcel of land upon which the chapel will be built is very large and since the chapel will be located in the middle of the parcel, we do not foresee that the chapel will cause any inconvenience or disturbance to the neighborhood or to the City. Our community greatly values silence as an appropriate atmosphere for prayer and personal reflection. None of the activities carried on in the new chapel will create noise. The chapel will be built of durable and noble materials which will enhance the beauty of the neighborhood. The safety of our grounds and buildings is important to us. No toxins or harmful waste products are produced as a result of activities at our monastery, and we are committed to recycling and energy conservation.

2e, ii.

Our parcel of land has always been and continues to be zoned as Public Facility. No change in land use is envisioned in our plans. Since our parcel of land is heavily wooded and borders Lake Demontreville on its west side, we in no way interfere with the development plans of the City of Lake Elmo. The comprehensive plan is for public/park. The rural character of the area will not be changed by the addition of the new chapel building.

2e, iii.

Our property is bordered on the south and east by low density private housing, on the north by the Jesuit Retreat House, and on the west by Lake Demontreville. Woodland separates our buildings from the single-family neighborhoods which border our property to the east and to the south. Woodlands also separate us from the Jesuit Retreat House. There is no direct view of our buildings from any neighboring property. There is no incompatibility between our hermitage and the existing neighborhood. We have excellent relations with our neighbors. Many have told us that they are very grateful to live next to our hermitage both because of the prayerful and religious nature of our life and also because of our extensive woodlands.

The Jesuit Retreat House shares the same prayerful and religious activities as we do. Far from being incompatible, our institutions belong to the same church and share a common way of life. The one priest who is resident at the Jesuit Retreat House opposes our new chapel because of a fear that it will increase traffic on the roadway which passes through Jesuit property to reach our hermitage. We have told him that we will work with him to minimize any disturbance to the retreats which take place from Thursday evening through Sunday evening most weeks. Since we do not advertise in any way nor offer programs for the public, we do not anticipate large crowds coming to our hermitage. Visitors will be intermittent and will usually arrive in a single car. By contrast, there may be fifty or more cars which come to and leave from the Jesuit Retreat House at the beginning or end of the weekly retreat. Trucks make food deliveries during the week and a laundry truck comes each week to replace sheets and towels. The Retreat House employs far more people than our Hermitage, and this also adds to the traffic in the area.

2e, iv.

Our project conforms to Article 7 of the Zoning Code, including general requirements for parking as regards dimensions and number of parking spaces.

2e, v.

The project is not in a flood plain. The project is in a shoreland district. The project meets the setback and lot area requirements of the ordinance. Demontreville Lake is a recreational development lake. The project is a permitted use in the shoreland district

	Ordinance	Proposed
Setback County Road	50	2750'
Setback Public Street	20	1025'
Setback OHW	200	980'
Setback top of bluff	30	220'
Setback OHW- Septic	75	810'
Maximum impervious coverage	15%	1.2%

--	--	--

2e, vi.

The new chapel will be constructed of the same materials as the existing buildings of the hermitage (brick and stone). The monastery of the Carmelite nuns is also a brick structure. The main building complex of the Jesuit Retreat House is a limestone structure. No change in the character of the area will result from the construction of our chapel. The nearest land uses are also religious.

2e, vii.

The chapel will be isolated from neighbors and will not create a hazard or nuisance to existing or future neighboring structures.

2e, viii.

The project will be served adequately by existing public services and will not create any additional demand for public services. The site utilizes an onsite well and onsite septic system. In 1991 officials from the Lake Elmo Fire Department visited our Hermitage to determine whether our site presented any difficulties of access for the fire department. Fire Chief Dick Sachs stated in writing that our site did not pose any problems to his department. (See attached letter.)

2e, xi.

The project will not create a need for additional public services or facilities. No detriment to the economic welfare of the community will result from the construction of our chapel.

2e, x.

The chapel will be used for religious purposes by the residents of the Hermitage. Guests and visitors will have access to the chapel at suitable hours of the day. The chapel has a planned seating of 42 persons, but we do not anticipate having nearly this many people at our services on a daily basis. At the present time, we have no more than 0 to 10 visitors a day. Most days the number is 0 to 2. The new chapel will not produce noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors, and the increase of traffic on account of the chapel will be minimal.

2e, xi.

The site is accessed via a collector street (Demontreville Trail) and a private drive. The additional traffic generated by the chapel is estimated to be 8 average daily trips on most days of the year and 30 average daily trips on a few occasions in a calendar year. Most trips will occur during non-peak hours.

2e, xii.

The new chapel will be built in an open field and will result in very minimal tree removal (8-10 evergreens which we ourselves had planted). No wetlands will be impacted. The chapel will be located 980' feet from Lake Demontreville. The final phase of our monastery building program will consist of a building for visitors and guests as well as some rooms for community workshops and library.

Landscaping Plan

Because the area around the chapel will be further developed with a guest building, workshops and a small library, we do not plan extensive landscaping around the chapel. Lawn grasses, some foundations shrubs, and a few flower beds will be planted and mulched with wood chips. Mr. Ken Roberts thought that, under these circumstances, it would not be necessary to submit a separate landscaping plan.