

Special Board of Works Meeting In Person and Hybrid/Zoom on March 31, 2025

The Board of Public Works and Safety met in special session on Monday, March 31, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, City of Michigan City, on Hybrid/ Zoom and streamed live on the "Access LaPorte County" Facebook page.

The meeting was called to order by President Skyler York.

On the call of roll, the following Board Members were found to be present or absent.

Noted present in person: Candice Antisdell, Tamiko Smith, Skyler York, Peggy Moore (4)
Absent: Gene Simmons (1)

Also noted in attendance:

Corporate Counsel Amber Lapaich-Stalbrink; Izabelle Galvin Ellis, Clerk of the Board of Works; Christine Vanderborg; Code Enforcement Manager; Jeff Bruder, Fire Marshall; Sue Downs, Building Commissioner; Tim Werner, City Engineer; Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch.

Emergency Demolition Hearing

Public hearing on Emergency Order to Demolish Unsafe Building located at 301 E Barker Ave., known as God's Grace Church.

Respondents Christine Vanderborg, Code Enforcement Manager, Tim Werner, City Engineer, Jeff Bruder, Fire Marshall, and Sue Downs, Building Commissioner, were present on behalf of the City of Michigan City and were sworn in.

Petitioner, Anni Ikene, 2421 S Michigan St., South Bend, Indiana 46614, appeared in person on behalf of Life and Kingdom Have His House of Praise Inc. and without Counsel and was sworn in.

Witness, Kathy Stransky, 223 E Barker Ave., appeared in person and without counsel and was sworn in.

Evidence was heard and given by Christine Vanderborg, stating that the property was condemned in November of 2024 due to the West Wall bowing out and being structurally unsafe and all utilities were shut off; after that communication was happening between Pastor Lisa Jackson of the Church and herself, and then on the evening of March 10, 2025, the West Wall imploded into the sidewalk and street and emergency fencing was put around the building; asking for the approval of emergency demolition of 301 E Barker Ave.

Corporate Counsel Amber Lapaich accepted pictures into evidence as "Exhibit A" and Assessment Order for Demos into evidence as "Exhibit B"

Evidence was heard from Sue Downs, stating that this is a result of a lack of maintenance and concurs with Mrs. Vanderborg on the Emergency Demolition; further stating that it's a safety hazard for residents who drive by, the residents who live near the church and the school and students at Marsh Elementary School.

Corporate Counsel Amber Lapaich asked why this is considered an emergency, and Mrs. Downs stated that it was because the wall had collapsed, causing a safety hazard for anybody who goes near the building, especially children.

Corporate Counsel Lapaich asked if the structure is a life-safety hazard, and Mrs. Downs stated yes because of the close proximity of the school and park across the street and a minor collapse could cause serious injury to someone.

Evidence was heard from Tim Werner, stating that he had first investigated the structure shortly after he started working for the City in January of 2024 and found the West facing wall was bowing out, come winter they found that the wall was getting worse and then on March 10th the wall collapsed, and a week after the collapse he found that the foundation of the building was crumbling and there was displacement in the wood framing.

Mrs. Smith asked if there was any chance of fixing the structure, and Mr. Werner stated no.

Evidence was heard from Jeff Bruder, stating that the gas and electric were on the same wall that had collapsed and that the building has other structural issues, like the steeple also had issues due to a lack of gutter system causing the water to deteriorate the brick, and believes that the building should be demolished for safety purposes.

Mrs. Vanderborg stated that she has quotes from contractors for demolition.

Corporate Counsel Amber Lapaich stated that if this is so much of an emergency that we can't solicit quotes properly, and Mrs. Vanderborg stated yes.

Anni Ikene asked how much it would cost to demolish the church.

Mrs. Vanderborg stated that they have received eight (8) bids from \$68,500 up to \$158,800; further explaining that the \$158,800 quote would be a fully contaminated demolition, meaning they would remove all decontamination like asbestos, lead and so forth and the \$68,500 price would be just the teardown and removal of brick, no abatement.

Mrs. Downs explained the cost breakdown of the difference in demolitions.

Mrs. Smith asked if there was any reason why we wouldn't want to do a contaminated demolition.

Petitioner, Anni Ikene, addressed the Board stating that he isn't representing God's Grace Church but he is there representing Life and Kingdom Have His House of Praise Inc. and that they did not receive any sort of complaint until March 24, 2025; further explaining that he has not owned the building since September 3, 2005 and explained the history of God's Grace leasing then purchasing the building.

Corporate Counsel Amber Lapaich submitted the original lease agreement between God's Grace Church and Life and Kingdom Have His House of Praise Inc. into evidence as "Respondent Exhibit A".

Mrs. Vanderborg asked if he had received any tax notices showing that he own the property, and Mr. Ikene stated no.

Witness, Kathy Stransky, addressed the Board stating that she has lived next door to the church her entire life and has watched many people go through the church, but it was never an issue; further explaining that she believes that it's a safety hazard and should be demolished.

Mr. Ikene stated that he does not own the building and wishes to not obtain any costs.

Mrs. Moore asked when the last time a church service was held at God's Grace Church, and Mrs. Stransky stated that it's been since last fall since there was a church service.

Mrs. Smith confirmed who owns the land.

President York confirmed that there is money available for the demolition.

Mrs. Antisdel made a motion to affirm the Code Enforcement's decision for demolition and give them the authority to choose the contractor based on the emergency situation, seconded by Mrs. Smith and was approved with the following vote:

AYES: (4) Antisdel, Moore, Smith & York


NAYS: (0) None

Mrs. Smith made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Antisdel and was approved with the following vote:

AYES: (4) Antisdel, Moore, Smith & York

NAYS: (0) None

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 a.m.



BOW President, Skyler York



BOW Clerk, Isabelle Galvin Ellis