



Date of Release: 3.13.2020

Informational Statement for Sierra Madre City Council Meeting on March 10, 2020

Good evening Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers. My name is Joe Sanders, and I am a Past Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center.

I have been asked to read the following statement into the record of tonight's Council Meeting on behalf of Cameron Thornton, another Past President of our Board and our public spokesperson for the development efforts at Mater Dolorosa. Mr. Thornton is unable to be present tonight.

Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers, I truly wish I was present tonight and making this statement directly to you and the citizens of Sierra Madre. I have been involved as a Lay Passionist at Mater Dolorosa for over five decades and unfortunately, I have a family conflict that precludes my attendance tonight.

I would like to first thank City Manager, Mr. Gabe Engeland. Since becoming City Manager a few years ago, we have always found Mr. Engeland to be very transparent and forthright about all matters at City Hall. He is a true public servant who cares about all citizens who call Sierra Madre home. Thank you, Mr. Engeland.

As I have previously shared before this body, the Passionists of Holy Cross Province, who own Mater Dolorosa, made a decision to sell and develop a portion of their property back in 2007. Internally, we have referred to this property as "The Meadows." Since being given this directive, the Retreat Center's Board of Directors has worked on evaluating this vacant property in order to raise funds for the Province in a manner that will not impact our retreats.

For five years through 2012, the Board worked with the Province in Chicago to evaluate a number of different options, including reaching out to "Angel Donors" to see if any were interested in purchasing The Meadows for conservation purposes. The Board was not successful in raising money from either individuals or Foundations for the purpose of purchasing The Meadows.



The need for funds at the Province level has increased over these past many years to support our ministries across America and internationally, and care for our priests and brothers, who now have a median age of 72.

When the city implemented the water moratorium on July 8, 2014, it put our plans for a potential residential development on hold. During the period the water moratorium was in place, the Board continued to evaluate various Institutional uses that would be permitted on the property.

As you are aware, we had extensive talks with the City Manager about the City purchasing The Meadows while the water moratorium was in place. These talks led to the mutual conclusion that a City purchase was not a viable alternative.

We have also maintained open dialogue with the City Manager about the different alternatives we have considered and evaluated over the past 13 years. These ongoing conversations confirmed our earlier conclusion that a neighborhood of new homes was the alternative that would have the least impact on our neighbors, while meeting the Province's needs and protecting the retreat experience.

Based on our conversations with the City Manager, the Province and Board of Directors desire to enter into an agreement with the City to sell The Meadow to a homebuilder for the purpose of creating a new housing development on our property.

I pledge that our Board of Directors will work with the City, our homebuilder and residents throughout the process to ensure the resulting neighborhood:

- Creates a fully funded City park in an area currently lacking a park
- Blends with the existing neighborhoods near the property
- Reflects the village character of Sierra Madre
- Is designed to conserve water and energy
- Respects nature and creates parks and paths
- Meets our commitments to our neighbors, and
- Protects the character and ongoing mission of the Retreat Center

In closing, I hope and pray that everyone understands that Mater Dolorosa is a concerned neighbor and we are committed to Sierra Madre. Thank you.



Should you have any questions associated with our development project, please call or email our spokesperson, Cameron Thornton, at (818) 281-2360 or by email at property@materdolorosa.org