

GARFIELD

Unwed teenage mothers home planned for city

BY CHRISTIAN WELCH
Staff Writer

Habitat for Humanity recently presented to city officials its plan to renovate a building at 58 Farnham Ave. into a group home for unwed teenage mothers.

At the council's work session meeting on July 22, Susan Safire, Habitat's Bergen County director, told local officials the organization plans on renovating the current building on the lot, now empty, into two separate housing units that would house four unwed teenage mothers, their children and an on-site house monitor. The house-monitor would supervise activities at the facility, which will be called Zoe's Place.

"These are really good kids but

they don't have a place to live," said Safire of the teen mothers who would occupy the two units.

Once operational, Safire said Zoe's Place will be funded by a private organization.

Safire told officials the organization would also like to build a pair of homes to the rear of the current structure on the lot. She showed officials diagrams of the proposed two buildings, which would each include two separate units. She explained to create these two buildings the city's zoning board would have to approve the organization's variances because the rear of the lot is very narrow.

"There would be four families who would own their homes in Garfield," said Safire, citing all four families would be required to pay a low-interest mortgage.

Safire added these four families will go through an extensive screening process by the organization before they qualify for the homes.

Reviewing the plans, Councilman Louis Aloia suggested Habitat's design also include ample room for parking space, noting finding a reasonable parking spot in the municipality can be a difficult task.

Safire said Habitat is in the process of purchasing the property with the assistance of the Bergen County Department of Community Development (BCDCD) and Bergen County's United Way. She said this purchase would be funded through BCDCD grants.

City Manger Tom Duch said the proposed four family units and the teen home would go a long way in fulfilling new state Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) requirements that might be looming on the horizon.

Safire said Habitat for Humanity would like to start the renovation of the current building as soon as October.

Christian Welch's e-mail address is welch@northjersey.com

