

MINEOLA

Church: Speed up school-sale decision

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An application for a 197-unit apartment complex at the site of a former Catholic school is being touted as a potential saving grace for a local church, though the Mineola village board's decision is months away.

At a public hearing on Wednesday, Monsignor Robert J. Batule of Mineola's Corpus Christi Parish said that the school's sale is vital to the church's future, adding that the parish owes the Diocese of Rockville Centre \$400,000.

Batule entreated the board to act quickly, saying the church is in "desperate shape." The board will resume the hearing in January.

"It would really be impossible for our parish to repay that debt unless something extraordinary happens," Batule told the board. "Putting this off into January is really going to give us more stress than we had up to this point."

Diocese officials could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The church is selling two properties to Mill Creek Residential, a national real estate development company with headquarters in Dallas. The former Corpus Christi Elementary School at 120 Searing Ave. was closed in June 2010 due to declining enrollment, Batule said. The adjacent property at 121 Searing Ave. includes a parking lot and a wood-frame home.

The contract of sale was made more than a year ago, said Jamie Stover, a vice president at Mill Creek Residential. The developer has also purchased a residence at 127 Searing Ave., which will be razed.

The applicant's team, including the architect, legal counsel and outside experts, made their presentation before a standing-room-only crowd of more than 70 parishioners and residents.

Plans call for two multi-story apartment buildings less than a mile from the LIRR station. Both would be four stories, with parking levels at grade and below ground. There are 306 parking spots planned, which allows roughly 1.55 spots per unit. Several villagers said this was insufficient and would overwhelm the area's municipal lots, for which residents pay \$55 annually.

Mill Creek has two other apartment communities in Mineola near the LIRR station. The 275-unit Modera, at 140 Old Country Rd., opened in August. The Hudson House, at 104 Front St., which has 36 income-restricted units for those 55 and older, opened in August 2014.

When asked about oversaturating the market for transit-oriented development, Stover said the supply would meet the demand.

"We believe we could build many more of these projects in the village of Mineola and they'd still be full," Stover said.