

# Miami fraternity aims to add library

Pi Kappa Alpha hopes to alter house, improve its looks from street.

**By Bob Ratterman**  
Contributing Writer

OXFORD — It was a case of the past bumping up against present when plans to expand the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity house at 410 E. Church St. came before the Oxford Planning Commission on Tuesday

for consideration of a conditional use.

The fraternity's housing corporation is planning to build an addition to improve the house's appearance from the street and add a library, conference room, additional bathrooms and handicapped-accessible areas. It is not aimed at greatly increasing occupancy, the group's introduction said.

"We are currently permitted for 39 residents," said the introduction included in the

commission's agenda packet. "Our addition would net three more dormitory rooms and an anticipated 42 to 44 capacity. This allows for more one-person rooms, which today students prefer."

The fraternity house was built in 1966 before the current zoning code was enacted, and no major construction has taken place in that time. Under the zoning code, the fraternity is required to have a conditional use permit for the property, but it had never been an

issue until it brought plans for the addition to the city.

For that reason, the application before the commission was for the conditional use of a fraternity house in that area. It is zoned Single and Two-Family Mile Square Residential.

Commission discussion centered on the double-stack parking along the rear alley and lot coverage exceeding code limits.

Pi Kappa Alpha is known as the fraternity with the fire en-

gine in front, and house corporation president Terry Raulin, the applicant, said they plan to keep the fire engine in front of the house after construction.

The house currently runs north-south with a two-story structure, with a wing partway back going to the west. The construction plan calls for that wing to go to two stories and then extend out toward the street, forming what city

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planner Sam Perry described as “two towers” with the existing building.

Perry said there is existing encroachment on the alley by cars parked in the rear lot and said the lot coverage would increase slightly with the addition.

“We have talked to the applicant and he is willing to do something about (the parking situation),” Perry said, adding the police department has indicated parking control can become involved if problems persist.

Raulin said the fraternity has attempted to purchase the property to the west, which would have

negated some of the space issues it faces, but he sees no hope of acquiring that land.

“It has us pinned in, quite honestly,” he said.

He also said some of the current lot coverage is in pavers, which allow water to percolate into the ground and not run off, although he acknowledged the coverage would be significant when the planned construction is added to the site.

City staff recommended commission approval of the conditional use, with three conditions – dealing with parking, lot coverage and trash/recycling facilities. Commission members voted 5-0, with two members absent, to recommend approval to Oxford City Council, attaching all three conditions. Fraternity officials agreed to address all three and said they will work to eliminate the alley encroachment, possibly by assign-

ing parking spaces with smaller vehicles at the western end of the area, which is a bit shorter.

Staff suggested use of stormwater practices to mitigate some of the rain runoff with the excessive lot coverage issue, including the possibility of channeling roof run-off into a “rain garden” or increasing the use of pervious pavers.

Tuesday’s action will move the request along to council. Since Tuesday’s issue was a zoning question, the application was focused on issues other than the specific design of the proposed construction, and those drawings have not yet been done. They will go to the city for approval once complete, but must conform to the conditional use provisions if approved by council.

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