

German School Marks Time on Bid for Expansion

City planning board examines the fine print in the latest proposed revisions to the site plan.



Robert F. Davis, the German School's attorney, appears on a closed-circuit monitor Tuesday in the Common Council's city hall chamber.

Dotting i's and crossing t's, members of the White Plains Planning Board closely reviewed the fine print Tuesday of proposed changes in how the German School New York plans to remake itself.

The broad strokes of those plans—a one-third increase in enrollment, redesigned grounds off Partridge Road and an added five-lot subdivision off North Street—have been discussed for the better part of two years, attracting at times both the earnest attention and energetic input of the school's Havilands Manor neighbors.

But on Tuesday, the big picture and the neighbors had a night off. So, for more than an hour in the Common Council's city hall chamber, planners and staff talked details. Largely fine points, they are contained in proposed modifications that were made to satisfy environmental-impact concerns, the school's attorney, Robert F. Davis, said. They covered such things as lighting, sidewalks and traffic flow; questions ranged from specifics about a stone wall's relocation to how student parking restrictions would be enforced.

The board made clear at the outset that the school's two-year-old application would not materially advance at this session. "I think it's important to note that we're only seeing this [list of proposed modifications] for the first time," said board Chairman Michael Quinn. He drew a distinction between the planning department staff, which Davis said had seen his document, and the appointed board, which the chairman said had not.

Board secretary Eileen McClain said, "The board is not voting tonight on whether or not to approve the project."

That project—the big-picture version—has three main goals. First, it looks to raise the cap on enrollment from 375 to 500 students, mostly children of German, Swiss and Austrian nationals

working here for German companies but also including other German- and English-speaking students.

Next, the school would redesign its grounds at 50 Partridge St., at least in part to accommodate the larger student body, including a larger parking lot and a new entrance providing access directly from North Street instead of threading school traffic through the neighborhood's residential streets.

Finally, the school wants to acquire a five-lot subdivision at 800 North St. on which to build single-family homes. Davis, the German School attorney, told the board that the units were intended as rental accommodations for the families of students and staff.

Founded in 1980, the Deutsche Schule New York set up shop with 64 students in the onetime North Street Elementary School, assuring parents their children would receive a solid German education despite living abroad.