

March 9, 20013

Alderman Mike Verveer, District 4

Dear Mr. Verveer:

I read with interest in the Badger Herald March 7, 2013, 'Church Plan Criticized' that Holy Redeemer Parish plans to turn the old grade school into apartments.

I have personal experience of this building, and perhaps information that others are not aware of. or that has not been publicized.

I will be brief, but am available for further inquiry if you need more information.

About ten years ago I was seeking a new home for the UW Gymnastics Club, after the UW Madison cut gymnastics as a UW Sport, and subsequently 'renovated' some would say destroyed the old Red Gym facility.

Initially I moved the gymnastics equipment to the Madison Turners Gymnastics Gym near the square, but that historic facility was soon torn down to make room for a parking lot. we found a temporary home at the new East Side Turners Gym, but were very grateful when Fr Holmes allowed me to move into the old Holy Redeemer Grade school.

The third floor of the Holy Redeemer School housed an old auditorium/stage/gym/movie theatre - perhaps the first of its kind in Madison late 1800's with beautiful architecture and furniture seating, etc. The facility had been used for storage and essentially ignored since the 1960's. It was infested with mice, bats, pigeons, other vermin and their associated carcasses and waste. I was allowed use of the facility in exchange for cleaning/renovation. I repaired an amazing steam heating system it ran off leather driven pulley in the basement, repaired the plumbing and broken windows, and eradicated the vermin.

I subsequently lost use of the facility for gymnastics purposes, when Fr Holmes was transferred to another parish he later returned to Holy Redeemer.

My point is that I put my heart and soul into that facility. The interior theatre/gym is an amazing piece of architecture and art, and It is a great asset - in that function - for the Madison Community and the Parish of Holy Redeemer.

I guess it is a controversial topic, but I have always admired the church for preserving works of art/beauty, and sharing them with the community. i really appreciate Fr Holmes for giving me the opportunity to use the facility for a brief period, as it really enriched the lives of the gymnasts that used it, and I have very good memories.

Could you please send me a copy of this message, as I would like to forward a copy to Fr. Holmes and any other parties you might suggest. Please feel free to forward this message to others that are interested in preserving the interior of this building.

Sincerely,  
Tom Taagen

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