

Date: February 15, 2023

To: Members of Diamondhead City Council

Nancy Depreo,	Mayor
Gerard Maher,	Council Member at Large
Shane Finley,	Council Member, Ward 1
Anna Liese,	Council Member, Ward 2
John Cumberland,	Council Member, Ward 3
Charles "Chuck" Clark	Council Member, Ward 4
Jon McCraw	City Manager
Derek Cusick	City Attorney
Melissa Williams	City Attorney

From: Diamondhead Senior Village Board/Diamondhead Steering Committee

Arnold Jerald Jackson, MD	Lynda Gilmore
Sarah Shelton	Gina Necaie
Brenda Boyle	Mary Coyne-Jackson
Harold Dawley	Nancy Depreo
Mary Jo Hirsch	Thelma Nickens
Theresa Pettijohn	

Re: Diamondhead Senior Village Expansion to Chapel

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On February 7, 2023 Mayor Depreo provided the Diamondhead City Council with a 6-week update on the Diamondhead Senior Village (DSV). Highlights of this presentation included the following:

- Approximately 200 residents of Diamondhead, age 60+ have attended one or more of the DSV events and completed the DSV Member Application/Waiver form;
- Many diverse educational, musical, recreational, and public service awareness events (n=12) have been held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Activities Room and attendees have graded each event as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good';
- Approximately 40-50 Diamondhead residents attend each event.
- Many DSV members have acclaimed that they have met more new friends and connected with old friends in the last 6 weeks than in their 10, 20, 30+ years of living in Diamondhead and are so grateful that senior residents are valued and supported by the Diamondhead City Council and the City of Diamondhead!

The good news is that DSV is growing rapidly and that older adults in Diamondhead are enjoying the support, friendships, and activities provided by DSV. The dilemma is that we are nearing safety capacity in the Activities Room at each event. WE ARE RUNNING OUT OF SPACE TO GATHER! Our request is to use the 'Chapel', which now serves as a storage area, as our DSV 'Gathering Place!'

The advantages of the Chapel are as follows:

- The Chapel can accommodate 2-3 times the number of people in the activity room.
- The Chapel is large enough to create diverse gathering spaces:
  - Small Group Area for activities such as friendly conversations, cards/games, etc.
  - Large Group Area for activities such as talks from the Fire Department, Coast Electric, Library, concerts, plays, etc.
  - Arts and Crafts Area
  - Refreshment Area
  - Library and Community Resource Area
  - Sports and Recreational Area
  - Computer Area
  - Movie/On Line Courses Area
- The Chapel has ample storage area for games, books, and food and serving items. Right now, we need to remove all the items used at each day at our events in the Activities Room and store them for the next day's events
- The Chapel has its own entrance; is located next to handicapped accessible bathrooms; and has lots of accessible parking

The Diamondhead Steering Committee and DSV Board of Directors are willing to clean and ready the Chapel for use as the new home of the DSV. The DSV will be responsible for cleaning and maintaining the chapel and nearby bathrooms on a weekly and as needed basis. The City is welcome to conduct weekly inspections of these areas.

From earlier comments, there seems to be a reluctance to allow the DSV to use the chapel because the City would like to use the chapel for other purposes - i.e. as the Building and Permit Office. It seems wise to ask the questions:

- How many people will benefit from the use of the Chapel versus the DSV?
- How much will it cost the City to renovate the Chapel Area?

Diamondhead has over 3400 individuals age 60 and older. Older adults pay city, county and Federal taxes and are voters. If the question was put to this group, we are confident that they would vote to allow DSV to utilize the Chapel as their gathering place and to be fully supported by the City of Diamondhead. We thank you in advance for your attentiveness to this matter.

Each of you will come to an age that you will appreciate having services that meet your needs. We ask you to envision the Diamondhead Senior Village as a premier senior center in the south and one that other cities and counties wish to emulate. If there are questions, please forward them to [jjackson1420@yahoo.com](mailto:jjackson1420@yahoo.com) or call 601.264.3454.