

ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION of NORTH AMERICA

PRESS RELEASE:

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Opposition to Warren Mosque

The Planning Commission meeting of March 13, 2006 was a big surprise to the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA), and not a pleasant one. The Commission voted 6-3 denying IONA the use of their property at 28630 Ryan Road as a House of Worship.

Objections raised at the meeting included concerns about parking and traffic in the vicinity, but focused primarily on the issue of the "Islamic Call to Prayer."

The "Call to Prayer" gained international attention in April 2004 when a Muslim congregation in Hamtramck sought community approval to broadcast the call over loudspeakers outside the building prior to the five daily prayers. There was substantial division in the Muslim community on this issue. While some likened it to the practice of Christian Churches ringing bells to announce their prayer services, others realized that the potential for disturbing neighbors was the overriding concern. Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said "He is not a believer... whose neighbor is not safe from his mischief."

The Zoning Board has previously approved the variances required for the House of Worship use. IONA agreed in writing, as a condition of the variance approval, NOT to allow the "Call to Prayer" to be broadcast over loudspeakers outside the building. Issues of sufficient parking and traffic were addressed as well.

"We don't understand the Planning Board objections," said IONA president Steve Elturk. "The property is a former retail location... a strip mall. It has its own parking lot, with a privacy wall separating it from the residential area. The old adage goes... 'Good fences make good neighbors.' The only exit for traffic is Ryan Road, which has two lanes in each direction plus a median lane. The main prayer service for Muslims is at 1:30 pm on Friday afternoons. That would not affect traffic from work, school, or lunch hours. The Islamic Call to Prayer is not an issue either."

IONA is continuing to work with the City of Warren in trying to resolve the obstacles surrounding the project through mutual cooperation and hopes to avoid litigation. "Of course we feel that we are being unfairly denied the use of our own property," Elturk said, "We think that maybe the Planning Commission misunderstood the needs of an Islamic House of Worship, and judged on perception rather than objective fact."

Still, Elturk calls himself "cautiously optimistic." He has been working with various city departments, and the Mayor's office to resolve open issues in that spirit of mutual cooperation. "I am confident that when knowledge and understanding replace the fear and uncertainty that 'new neighbors' can bring, we will be a vibrant and vital part of the Warren community. We look forward to working with the city in the future."

Islamic Organization of North America
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END

IONA's mission is to transform its members and help transform the surrounding communities to righteous, God-fearing people, who collectively strive for the highest moral standard and constantly seek forgiveness from our Creator to earn His pleasure. We seek His compassion and mercy in this life and in the hereafter. We rejuvenate our soul through internal struggle and spiritual exercise in worship of our creator God. The strength of our belief in God gives us the courage to establish good and forbid evil, thus promoting a system of justice for all mankind.

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