

AURORA BEACON NEWS SUBURBS

# Aurora clergy speak out in support of Wayside Cross child sex offenders staying put

By MEGAN JONES | AURORA BEACON-NEWS | JUL 03, 2019 | 6:41 PM



The Rev. Dan Haas, left, and other clergy members from Aurora speak out Wednesday in support of the 19 convicted child sex offenders living at Wayside Cross Ministries who were given eviction notices. (Megan Jones / The Beacon-News)

The pastor of Warehouse Church in Aurora sees himself in a unique position — his church sits directly between Wayside Cross Ministries and McCarty Park.

As a lifelong Aurora resident, the Rev. Randy Schoof said he is deeply committed to the safety of its citizens. But the 19 convicted child sex offenders who live at Wayside Cross near the park are not a risk to safety, and if anything, it is more of a risk to let these men scatter throughout the city unsupervised, Schoof said.

Eight clergy members gathered in the chapel of Wayside Cross Wednesday to speak out and show their support for the men who were told they have to move out of the mission in downtown Aurora because they live too close to McCarty Park. Under state law, registered child sex offenders are prohibited from living within 500 feet of a school, playground or daycare facility.

Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin repeated his stance Tuesday, saying that state laws concerning child sex offenders are clear.

“Wherever they go, it can’t be within 500 feet of where children play,” Irvin said.

[\[Most read\] Column: Epstein sex trafficking charges could shine light on Clinton, Trump. Time for bipartisan revulsion. »](#)

After the city created addresses for all of its parks in late 2018, city staff realized the mapping tool used by Aurora police was incorrectly tracking the distance from one property to another, city officials have said, including the distance from McCarty Park to Wayside. Instead of mapping from property line to property line as the law states, the tool was measuring from the middle of one property to the other, they said.

Irvin said the eviction notices sent to Wayside were not in retaliation for the mission housing infamous “Ripper Crew” member Thomas Kokoraleis beginning in the spring.

When asked if it was a mistake to house Kokoraleis, the Rev. Dan Haas said no. Wayside did nothing more than follow its own mission statement to take anyone in and try to reform them, he said.

“The government does not have a right to tell a Christian mission who they can or can’t take in,” Haas said. “If they are serving their mission, that’s been widely known and not a secret for 92 years, taking Thomas Kokoraleis in is part of their mission. It wasn’t meant to blindside anyone.”

The clergy members asked citizens and City Council members to call Irvin and urge him to rescind the eviction notices.

[\[Most read\] He was a high school football star. A grisly car crash changed his life forever. His love of the game pushes him on. »](#)

Pastors from the Aurora Christian Ministry Network, Mission Aurora, Love Fox Valley and other Aurora churches were in attendance at the Wednesday event.

While the city’s actions are technically legal, Haas said it is arbitrary and not in line with the purpose of the Registered Sex Offender Statute, created in 2008.

“Are we to assume that sex offenders living at Wayside Cross are a danger to children who are 485 feet away, but not a danger at 510 feet away?” Haas said. “This is absurd reasoning. We agree there needs to be a standard, but the goal is no-contact with children, not the number of feet away from children.”

Wayside staff is not aware of a sex offender living there being arrested for inappropriate conduct, Haas said, adding that the men are on a strict schedule and confined to the Wayside campus during their residency.

Wayside was established in 1927 and has been a part of the downtown area when Aurora was thriving, in decline and now being revitalized, the members of the clergy said.

[\[Most read\] Nancy Rish seeks new sentence in notorious 1987 murder of Kankakee businessman who was buried alive »](#)

“Downtown Aurora can be both business and compassion,” Haas said.

Haas said that Wayside has impacted thousands of people who have been dealing with either alcohol, drug or sex addictions.

Clergy members said they worry about what will happen to the 19 men who, as registered sex offenders, will have a hard time re-entering society.

“Oftentimes, their own families can’t take them because they have younger children,” Haas said. “For registered sex offenders, it is really difficult for these men to build a future and they need help.”

[mejones@tribpub.com](mailto:mejones@tribpub.com)

reasoning. We agree there needs to be a standard, but the goal is no-contact with children, not the number of feet away from children.”

Wayside staff is not aware of a sex offender living there being arrested for inappropriate conduct, Haas said, adding that the men are on a strict schedule and confined to the Wayside campus during their residency.

Wayside was established in 1927 and has been a part of the downtown area when Aurora was thriving, in decline and now being revitalized, the members of the clergy said.

[\[Most read\] Nancy Rish seeks new sentence in notorious 1987 murder of Kankakee businessman who was buried alive »](#)

“Downtown Aurora can be both business and compassion,” Haas said.

## LATEST AURORA BEACON NEWS

## AURORA BEACON NEWS

Downtown apartment fire displaces Aurora residents

29m

## AURORA BEACON NEWS

5 things to do in the western suburbs July 12-18

41m

## AURORA BEACON NEWS

When things break, Aurora shop owner looks to provide the fix

48m

## SPORTS

Ready to return: Batavia's Drew lutzwig wants to make up for lost time as a senior in football

1h

## AURORA BEACON NEWS

New exhibit honors Oswego first responders

2h