

Muslims Sue Norwalk Over Rejection of Mosque

by Nancy Guenther Chapman



A man and child watch as television news crews conduct an interview after a controversial application to build a mosque in Norwalk was denied by the Zoning Commission.

Photo Credit: Nancy Guenther Chapman

NORWALK, Conn. – Local Muslims seeking to build a mosque in a residential neighborhood of Norwalk have filed a federal suit against the city over the Zoning Commission's denial of their application.

[Storzer and Greene, PLLC](#), a law firm with offices in New York and Washington, filed the suit Thursday on behalf of Al Madany Islamic Center of Norwalk, according to a statement. The complaint, filed in U.S. District Court, alleges violations of the First and 14th Amendments, the federal [Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act](#) and Connecticut's Religious Freedom Act. The suit also challenges the city's zoning regulations.

Al Madany's application for a special permit to build a mosque at 127 Fillow St. was denied June 6.

The Zoning Commission cited concerns about traffic and inadequate parking in its denial, as well as concerns about the size of the facility. "It would not blend well with the surrounding residential neighborhood," the commission stated in its resolution, which is attached below.

The complaint describes the center's need for a place of worship and the lack of an existing mosque in Norwalk, according to a statement. It alleges that the Zoning Commission's action was based on "misapplication of state and local laws," "ad hoc factors specifically and specially designed to prevent the construction of a mosque within Norwalk" and "unequal treatment as compared to similarly situated places of worship in the same area and zoning district."

The complaint states that a place of worship is an allowed use with a special permit in the residential zoning district where the property is located and alleges that the center complied with all promulgated standards for such a use.

"Federal law protects the right of all religious traditions, mainstream or minority, to a place where congregants can pray, worship together and teach their children," said Roman P. Storzer, attorney for the center, in the statement. "It is up to the faith-based organization, and not the government, to decide which religious activities are uses that are to be associated with its place of worship."

Al Madany Islamic Center is also represented by Fairfield attorney John F. Fallon.

http://cdn.dailyvoice.com/sites/default/files/denial_of_norwalk_mosque_060612.pdf Attached: [A letter from Norwalk's Planning and Zoning Department, containing a resolution denying a mosque at 127 Fillow St. \(denial_of_norwalk_mosque_060612.pdf\)](#)