



K'zoo funeral home gets approval for Battle Creek location

Battle Creek city commissioners have approved a funeral home's plans to open in a former church on Main Street.

Commissioners voted 8-0 Tuesday to approve a permit sought by Whitley Memorial Funeral Home of Kalamazoo for a new location at 319 Main St. Commissioner Lynn Ward Gray was traveling and not at the meeting.

Whitley already has an office in Battle Creek but does not have its own full-service location.

"We've been serving Battle Creek for the past four years, and the community has responded very well to our services and asked us to come with a full-service facility," said Jerome Whitley, the funeral home's owner and funeral director. "Now is the time, and we're taking advantage of it."

The lot at Main and Lathrop Avenue had been First Pentecostal Church of God In Christ. The church recently relocated to the south side to the former site of the Ball Joint Sports Bar on Beckley Road.

The city planning commission had recommended the permit be approved.

The Post-Franklin Neighborhood Planning Council also approved of the property becoming a funeral home.

Without its own facility in Battle Creek, Whitley said his funeral home has had to conduct services in local churches and been forced to turn away **business**.

He expects to have the funeral home operating by late July or early August with a capacity of more than 300 guests and the capability to house three visitations simultaneously.

Some remodeling to the building will be done, but Whitley said he plans to "maintain the integrity of that historic building."

He also said he will be hiring staff for the new location but wasn't ready to say how many.

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