

ARTISTS GET CITY SUPPORT

COUNCIL GIVES QUICK APPROVAL TO ZONING VARIANCE

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By Scott Powers

Dispatch City Hall Reporter

An arts center on E. 3rd Avenue received a multifaceted zoning variance last night that should help it hobble along until it finds more money.

The Milo Arts Group, housed at the former Milo School, 617 E. 3rd Ave., received Columbus City Council approval of a zoning change that allows artists to continue living and working there even though the building fails to meet zoning and building codes.

The center, founded in May 1988, is home to 24 artists and their studios. It could house as many as 45 artists.

About 100 residents and Milo participants turned out to urge approval of the variance, which covered use of the building and parking and set-back requirements. But the council approved the item so quickly that most people in the audience were uncertain what had happened.

"We think the Milo concept is very positive for the community, and we encourage it," said John P. Kennedy, president of the council's zoning committee.

Richard W. Mann Jr., one of Milo's organizers, said the group still needs money to renovate the building to meet codes. Mann said the group will approach the council again for help in obtaining a low-interest loan, perhaps for \$500,000.

The artists must share restroom and eating facilities, Mann said. There are no kitchens or baths, and much of the interior is in bad shape, he said. But the artists are so committed to the concept that they are getting along fine.

Stanley Wilder, vice president of the East 5th Avenue Area Action Group, told the council the Milo project has had a tremendous impact on the neighborhood.

"Before they moved in there, there was nothing but decay and vandalism," Wilder said. "These people have established themselves . . . and have used their knowledge and skills to help turn a decaying building into a productive center."

In other action, the council tabled for the fourth time proposals that would establish an appeals process for people whose building plans were rejected by architectural review boards or the Columbus Historic Resources Commission.

The proposals would create an appeals board to oversee architectural review decisions of the German, Italian and Victorian village commissions, the North Market Commission and the Historic Resource Commission.

Without an appeals board, residents in historic areas must file lawsuits in Franklin County Common Pleas Court to deal with grievances.

The matter was tabled because some council members did not have a chance to review a proposed amendment that would cut paperwork for some applicants.