



GPM January Pro Bono Spotlight

January 13, 2017

GPM attorneys have been helping the St. John's Episcopal church in St. Cloud fight for the right to maintain a tiny house on its grounds to provide short-term housing for homeless individuals while they get back on their feet.

GPM attorney Bob Feigh first got involved after the City of St. Cloud denied St. John's conditional use permit for the tiny house in 2015. Despite the City's zoning concerns, St. John's believed the tiny house was protected under federal law and moved in its first occupant in the summer of 2016. When St. John's received a notice of violation of the municipal code ordering it to vacate the tiny house, Feigh and a team of attorneys including Sam Diehl, Brian Dillon, and Amanda Sicoli filed a claim on behalf of the church in federal court under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which protects the exercise of religion by religious organizations, including the right to provide housing for the homeless.

The parties entered into a standstill agreement after the complaint was filed in August, in an attempt to negotiate a resolution of the dispute. Both sides met with a magistrate judge at the end of November, and agreed to schedule an early settlement conference in which the parties will try to balance the needs of the church, the protections in RLUIPA, and the requirements of state building codes.

To learn more about pro bono matters in which GPM attorneys are making a difference, visit our pro bono page.