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Christian Cassagnol
District Manager
Queens Community Board 4
46-11 104th Street
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Dear Mr. Cassagnol:

Thank you for your letter and the list of questions posed by participants at the most recent Pan Am Town Hall. Many of these questions were answered by New York City Department of Homeless Services staff who attended the meeting, but we are happy to provide answers in written form in the attached document.

Thank you again for continuing our ongoing dialogue. We look forward to working together as we help these families with children in your community at the Pan Am Hotel rebuild their lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Camille Rivera".

Camille Rivera
Deputy Commissioner for
Communications and External Affairs

Pan Am Hotel Town Hall Q&A

- 1) **What percentage of shelter residents will be substance abusers? What percentage of shelter residents will be from other boroughs and from other states?**

We cannot legally disclose information regarding individuals using illegal substances. DHS aims to place families in the borough of origin.

- 2) **At this time what percentage of residents at the Pan Am Hotel are being treated for mental problems?**

We cannot legally disclose this information.

- 3) **Where do residents go from 9 to 5? What is the incentive for people to leave the shelter and reduce the homeless population?**

DHS facilities are temporary shelters for anyone experiencing homelessness. The NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) believes that sheltering New York's most vulnerable families and adults is a collective responsibility to be shouldered by all. It is a legal and moral obligation.

For the duration of their stay at a shelter, clients are expected to develop, participate in and execute their Independent Living Plan (ILP). The ILP is a strategic plan to help clients obtain permanent housing and essentially acts as the family's road map to exiting shelter. Clients are partnered with case workers and service providers to access resources that will assist them in obtaining permanent housing. DHS requires shelter clients to gain employment, connect to work supports and other public benefits, save their income, and search for housing to prepare for independent living. Our clients are encouraged to participate in these activities during the day.

- 4) **Is it true that DHS has an annual budget of 1 Billion Dollars? Which is around \$125 per person in a city of 8 million like ours? Is it true that the homeless has a legal right to shelter no matter where they are from? Can you explain to us what "Legally mandated right to shelter" is?**

DHS is an agency comprised of 2,000 employees, with an annual operating budget of approximately \$1 billion. This budget is used to maintain our shelters, provide services to all of our clients, and supply resources to help our resident families and individuals meet their basic living needs. DHS also funds its shelters through a combination of Federal and State reimbursement. Currently DHS shelters 54,765 individuals in facilities throughout the five boroughs.

Pursuant to state and local law, and a class action settlement ordered by the court in Boston v City of New York, the City must provide shelter to every eligible homeless family with children who apply for shelter. Moreover, state and local law require DHS to place families with children in shelter pending investigation of their application for shelter. As a practical matter, this means that the Agency must

shelter families on the very same day they apply. In accordance with this legal mandate, we must and do successfully shelter homeless families 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. New York is the only city in the United States to currently have this legal protection for the homeless.

5) There is already 3 shelters in this community, why is it disproportionately distributed in this community in a growth one?

Sheltering New York's most vulnerable families and adults is a collective responsibility. Every borough, neighborhood, and community district must do its part to address and assist the growing number of homeless families. There are 22 shelters in Queens. This is the first shelter in Queens Community Board 4. Queens shelters are 9% of shelters citywide.

As the number of families with children residing in temporary, emergency shelter grows, we must consider all available options to address our city's capacity needs and meet DHS' legal mandate to provide shelter to all men, women and children who do not have a place to live.

6) There have been reports of abuse of residents by Samaritan Village staff at other shelters. Why have they not been investigated? Why is SV allowed to open more shelters and why do they keep getting city contracts?

All allegations of mistreatment of DHS clients are investigated and appropriate measures are taken to maintain the safety of our clients. Samaritan Village, like all providers, must undergo a screening process and a thorough contract negotiation before it can do work with the City of New York.

7) What and how do you implement services provided to the Homeless Residents?

DHS performs a comprehensive assessment of all applicant families at intake to determine their unique social service needs. Additionally, clients are referred to appropriate services to meet those needs. Participation in these social services is required as part of the client's Independent Living Plan (ILP) while in shelter. The ILP is a strategic plan to guide clients on their path to independent living.

8) We already have 3 shelters, what it worries our community is our children, we have many schools around and homeless shelters bring bad people, bad habits, and drugs. What are you going to do?

The vast majority of DHS's clients are men, women and children who are experiencing a terrible event in their lives — they have no other place to live. They are residing in our facilities because they are trying to return to independent living and an apartment of their own. To characterize and stereotype them as "bad people, [with] bad habits, and drugs" is offensive.

Within DHS facilities, there are security teams who monitor the behavior of clients within and surrounding our facilities. The security officers intervene and or contact the local police precinct when

needed. DHS collaborates with the NYPD to monitor criminal behavior and ensure the clients in our facilities abide by the rules of the site and the rules of the community.

As was mentioned above, this the first shelter in Community Board 4.

9) Samaritan Village lied at their website, lied to the press, and lied to the Elmhurst residents. How could the city work with an entity with zero credibility?

This was answered previously above. Samaritan Village is a long standing provider of services for homeless New Yorkers in need with an excellent track record of quality service. Its experience with this population focuses on compassion and guidance with the ultimate goal of getting its clients back on their feet.

10) What is max of families at shelter and amount of time there?

There are currently 181 families with children living at the facility. Overall, DHS' critical objective is to reduce our client's stay in shelter and increase placements into permanent housing.

The citywide average stay at shelter is just over a year. This timeline is dependent upon the client's commitment to the Independent Living Plan (ILP). The ILP is a detailed plan that is developed for each household, outlining relevant goals to exit shelter and return to self-sufficiency. Clients work with case managers to develop and implement their ILP goals.

11) What is the greater good? DeBlasio wants to destroy the fabric of our neighborhood.

It is disappointing that the community feels that these homeless families with children living at Boulevard Family Center exist to "destroy the fabric of our neighborhood." Almost half of these families with children are working – in some cases both parents are working, but still can't get by or save enough to afford their own apartment.

12) How long does Samaritan Village plan on staying at PAN AM as a shelter?

DHS refers to the facility as the Boulevard Family Center and will use the facility for as long as we need it.

13) Lisa Black, why did you lie to me you said in Queens Chronicle, "no shelter", at that time the homeless had already moved in. You deceived me. We are speaking truth to power?

DHS had no plans for a shelter for families with children at the Pan Am at that time, and we were not in an emergency capacity situation. Today, we have over 54,000 people daily, who are sheltered in our system, 74% are families and 23,000 of them are children. We need to provide beds each night to each

one of our clients. During these emergency situations, DHS must make immediate decisions to meet its legal and moral mandate.

- 14) I go by 2 times a day. Always ambulanced, fire or cops there why? What's going on? Can't you control the residents?**

The Boulevard Family Center does not have a medical facility on site. If clients are experiencing any medical challenges, we need to contact First Responders to assess the clients' needs and transport them to a medical facility, if necessary.

- 15) What kind of homeless people will be housed in Pan AM? Families, single men/women?**

Families with minor children currently occupy the Boulevard Family Center.

- 16) What policies are in place to help those in the shelter? How are those in need of shelter going to get back on their feet? Is solely the government responsible? Isn't the community an integral a part of the process? By the lack of communication it makes it hard for anyone in the community to have faith in those in charge to help.**

DHS has a legal and moral obligation to provide shelter to all men, women and children who are deemed eligible. In meeting this legal mandate, we don't only provide a place to sleep; our critical objective is to assist our clients with obtaining self sufficiency by gaining employment assistance and moving into permanent housing. We also seek to reduce re-entry into the shelter system by providing after care for our clients who have moved into permanent housing.

The Community is indeed an integral part of the process. DHS believes clients who are placed in a community where they have a support system increase their abilities to retain permanent housing. DHS also cares about the relationships with our facilities' neighbors. We will continue to maintain open dialogue with community leaders and elected officials regarding the facility.

- 17) State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli exposed malfeasance by Samaritan Village, so why did the City Comptroller, Scott Stringer, reward them with a multimillion dollar contract? Who is going to audit them on a City level?**

The State Comptroller audited the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) (a state agency) and their contract management abilities, not Samaritan Village. In order to obtain a contract with the City, all vendors must submit to a responsibility determination by the Mayor's Office of Contract Services.

- 18) Can you tell us how many children are there currently in the shelter and what is the plan to help them attain a proper education? We are very concerned. What is Samaritan Village's**

track record? How effective is Samaritan Village at getting shelter residents back on their feet and self-sufficient?

There are more than 300 children in the Boulevard Family Center. The children have the option of attending their previously-attended school in the fall. DHS works hand in hand with the Department of Education (DOE) to ensure children residing in its facilities meet their educational requirements and have access to the resources they need to successfully participate in their education.

For more than 50 years, Samaritan Village has been wholly dedicated to improving the quality of life for New Yorkers facing adversity. Samaritan Village provides comprehensive health and human services to more than 6,000 individuals annually through a network of more than 20 facilities throughout New York City and New York State.

19) Who is responsible for maintaining order, tidiness and presentable residence at the shelter? What is the short-term and long-term plans for the homeless here?

Samaritan Village manages the facility.

DHS' mission is to provide short-term emergency shelter and re-housing support to our clients. The residents at the Boulevard Family Center will receive supportive social services which will help them obtain permanent housing. We will continue to shelter families at this location on an as needed basis.

20) Comptroller Stringer said he approved an emergency declaration for family shelters "across the city" so that DHS can house homeless families. Where are the other shelters located as there has been no word about them?

Since January 2014 we have opened 11 new shelters – 2 of them have been in Queens. Additionally, we have expanded our presence at an existing shelter in Queens which we have utilized for many years. We do not provide the addresses of shelter facilities in an effort to adhere to state confidentiality provisions and of course to maintain the safety of our clients who are escaping domestic violence. There are shelters located in each borough.

It is important to understand that all communities must share the responsibilities of these facilities as the City does its part to help homeless New Yorkers regain stability and return to independent living. We ask that you be compassionate and empathetic to these New Yorkers who are rebuilding their lives.

21) What is DHS's plan of reducing the homeless population as pledged by Commissioner Gilbert Taylor when he took office? And how will DHS achieve this goal?

Commissioner Gilbert Taylor's priority is to implement innovative methods to impact the number New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. His 4-Point Plan, announced on May 19, 2014, explored the ways DHS can enhance its services. More details can be found on our website, www.nyc.gov/dhs

The plan includes:

- 1) Increasing homeless prevention services—expanding the support services to target at risk persons and help them to remain in their homes and community
- 2) Increase resources to help families transition to permanent housing
- 3) Target Supportive Housing for high needs population
- 4) Assess, improve and re-imagine city shelters

Commissioner Taylor's plan is designed to assist New Yorkers facing immediate and chronic homelessness.

22) He stated that his security team will be there to assist with any issues. What is the capability of your security outside your facility?

Samaritan Village' private security officers patrol the perimeter of the facility and monitor the behavior inside the shelter on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis.

23) Legacies: Robert Moses destroyed the Bronx, how will Mayor DeBlasio avoid this same reputation while destroying the Queens Community and tourist economy?

Again, it is disappointing that the community feels that these homeless families with children living at the Boulevard Family Center exist to "destroying the Queens Community." Almost half of these families with children are working – in some cases both parents are working, but still can't get by or save enough for an apartment.

24) Stephen Berger of Family Center Associates (which runs other shelters at borough hotels) is listed as the current owner of the Pan Am as part of "79000 Development, LLC". The deed was purchased for \$23M back in February 2014. (Interestingly, the previous owner granted them a \$16M mortgage.) When was this agreement actually reached, since surely, the hotel would not have been purchased if there was not a contract in place for a shelter? How much will the owner receive for renting out the shelter and for what duration is the contract?

DHS has a relationship with the service provider Samaritan Village, not the landlord.

25) For how long will the individual homeless people be expected to stay in the shelter? What is the incentive for people to leave the shelter and reduce the homeless population? For how long will Pan Am be operated as a shelter?

The citywide average stay for families with children at a shelter is just over a year. This timeline is dependent upon the client's commitment to their unique Independent Living Plan (ILP). The ILP is a detailed plan that is developed for each household, outlining relevant goals to exit shelter and return to self-sufficiency. Clients work with case managers to develop and implement their ILPs and associated goals.

A shelter is a temporary housing solution for an individual experiencing homelessness. Once a client enters a DHS facility, they commit to successfully working on their ILP to return their families to permanent housing.

26) How long do homeless people wait before they are placed at Pan Am?

Families with children must apply for shelter at our PATH intake center, in order to ensure that they do not have an alternative housing option available to them. Under state and local law, DHS must place families with children in shelter pending investigation of applications for temporary housing assistance. As a practical matter, this means that the agency must shelter families the very same day they apply.

DHS firmly believes that families are best served in their communities through prevention efforts, and that they should only utilize temporary, emergency shelter as a last resort when they are experiencing an immediate housing crisis.

As a matter of sound public policy and good social work practice, we also strive to minimize the traumatic disruption to homeless families' lives by making every effort to place them in their borough of origin so that parents and children are not uprooted from their schools, community supports, and daily routines.

27) Will the Pan Am shelter eventually become a single man's shelter?

The Boulevard Family Center is currently operating as a shelter for families with children. Decisions on the future use of the site will be made by the Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services and the Service Provider.

28) What resources will the community have if shelter residents become a nuisance to the community in littering excessively, noise, rudeness, or community crimes in the shelter or in the neighborhood? Prostitution, theft, assault?

Alleged instances of nuisance behaviors, such as being excessively noisy, littering and loitering should be reported to the Program Directors by calling the following hotline number: 347-696-5910. Any alleged crimes should be reported to the local police precinct by calling 311 or 911.

- 29) While I am not objecting to a good cause, I am angry that this was done against our constituent right to a vote. Now that this is done how will you guarantee the safety of our children and the residents of this neighborhood? We worked hard to give our families a good home. What will you do?**

DHS is in an emergency capacity situation —we have more than 54,000 people daily living in shelter, 74% are families and 23,000 of them are children. DHS needs to provide beds each night to each one of its clients. During these emergency situations, we may need to make immediate decisions to meet our legal and moral obligation.

DHS continues to work closely with the community and the provider around the safety of its clients and the community.

- 30) My husband works in a hotel in the eastside and it's always booked! Sometimes, he even tried to call some hotel in queens just to accommodate tourists. Why can't this Pan AM be a hotel again? It'll be good business for queens.**

DHS played no role in the decision to disuse the Pan Am as a hotel.

- 31) Will there be added security and an increase of police presence at the homeless shelter? Will Samaritan Village/ DHS screen for criminals or pedophiles?**

Currently, Samaritan Village has 24 hour/7 day security on site. The provider also works closely with NYPD to provide appropriate enforcement presence.

DHS works with NYPD to identify individuals participating in criminal behavior. NYPD identifies and prosecutes these individuals and makes enforcement decisions.

- 32) We are happy to see Elmhurst just blooming, now regret to see the community go down. Mall business will go down since people are scared to shop. Be smart, make yourselves stronger, before you help.**

Again, it is disappointing that the community feels that these homeless families with children living at the Boulevard Family Center will make the "community go down." Almost half of these families with children are working – in some cases both parents are working, but still can't get by or save enough for an apartment.

Every borough, neighborhood, and community district, as part of the City of New York, must do its part to address and assist the growing number of homeless families.

33) Why did they choose to put a 2/6 room homeless shelter to another homeless shelter in the same neighborhood?

As we mentioned, this is the first shelter in CB4. DHS utilized the Boulevard Family Center in response to its emergency capacity situation.

34) Have you or are you planning to do any renovations? If so, what are there renovations?

There are no immediate plans for renovations.

35) There are conflicting reports over whether the Pan Am shelter is temporary or permanent. We hear from different media sources that it's for emergency placement of families on an "as needed" basis, but then we are told that once the families are placed, the shelter will house childless couples. Then again, we have a fully renovated "upscale" hotel inside, according to their now-defunct website, booking sites like hotels.com and witnesses who accessed the inside. Will it eventually be a hotel again? What is the truth?

At this time, the Boulevard Family Center is operating as a shelter for families with children to help the City meet its emergency need for sheltering facilities. Decisions about future use at this location have not yet been determined. However, we will continue discussion with the local elected officials and the community board and keep them abreast of any determinations.

36) What is the ratio of Samaritan security employees to the number of individuals in the shelter?

Samaritan Village has 24 hour/7 day a week security on site. DHS believes that the current security efforts are working and are sufficient for the site and the families with children population served there.

37) This area has created in the last time new modern hotels like 76/queens blvd, as an effort of NY City to respond for entry of tourism growing in the area. Why is now the intention to take out a very nice hotel like Pan American hotel to give it to the homeless? This, if will be happening, the tourism in this area will go down. The people who live in this area will be badly affected, the price of homes around this area will drop down – keep this as a hotel.

Again, DHS played no role in the decision to disuse the Pan Am as a hotel. It is important to understand that all communities must share in the effort to help homeless New Yorkers regain stability and rebuild their lives.

- 38) Are each of the guests paying the city's hotel tax? What is the max capacity of residents in the Pan American Hotel? How can you double the population of our 2010 Census block with the wave of a hand? Who is thinking about the impact of LARGE homeless shelters in small communities?**

DHS clients are not charged for their shelter and services they receive.

We understand your concerns, but DHS has a legal and moral obligation to shelter families with young children who do not have a place to sleep at night. At DHS, our critical objective is to reduce street homelessness and ensure the availability of temporary emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families.

- 39) What is the full name of the person who made the decision to moving in 36 families?**

The decision to shelter the families with minor children is ultimately made by the Commissioner of DHS in consultation with other city agencies and officials.

- 40) What is the ratio or formula used to determine how many facilities are placed in one zip code? Elmhurst now has 4. I lived on the upper east side of Manhattan, 10021, there were none!**

DHS tries to place families in communities in or near their previous residences.

- 41) The community would like to request a weekly report of any criminal activity at the shelter and any increase in crime in our neighborhood.**

The Community Board can request any statistics it needs from the local precinct. Moreover, a recent article in the *Queens Chronicle* by Christopher Barca stated that crime has gone down in the area. Deputy Inspector Ronald Leyson, the 110th Precinct's commanding officer, said in the article that crime has actually decreased in the area around the shelter at 79-00 Queens Blvd since families with children moved in.

- 42) Samaritan Village website speaks of rehabilitation for Drug and Alcohol. So how is it allowed for drug and alcohol to be on the property, for them while hanging out in the parking lot?**

Narcotics and Alcohol are not permitted on site at DHS Facilities. DHS Facility staff members provide social service programs to assist clients with any barriers to obtaining permanent housing. If substance abuse challenges have affected client's abilities to obtain permanent housing, Samaritan Village will or make the appropriate referrals.

- 43) If holiday Inn was so desperate enough to open in front of a commentary at Maurice Ave. How is it that a desirable property end up as a homeless shelter?**

Again, DHS played no role in the decision to disuse the Pan Am as a hotel.

- 44) Is it true when the temperature drops below 32 degree Fahrenheit, DHS can't turn away anyone who is seeking shelter?**

DHS has a moral and legal obligation to provide shelter to all men, women and children who are deemed eligible for services.

DHS has a cold weather emergency procedure through which street outreach efforts intensify during times of extreme winter weather conditions. The Street Outreach Team increases its efforts to encourage homeless individuals to seek shelter.

- 45) What ways are you encouraging the homeless residents to get jobs? Services should include educating them, offering parent skills – caring for infants through teens and job training.**

DHS works with clients to remove all barriers to obtain permanent housing. This includes making referrals to social services programs based on their needs and placing clients in specialty shelters. More than half the clients are currently working. Many of our clients are also attending schools.

New York City faces growing inequality at all levels. The cost of housing has increased, while over wages have stagnated or decreased. Even some of the basics are out of reach of today's families. We know that 46% of New Yorkers live at or near the poverty level; today, nearly half of the homeless families living in shelter are working. In some instances both adults are working and still can't afford the prerequisite down payments for an apartment.

- 46) What is really what progressives believe helps communities and homeless people? Warehousing them on top of each other? This practice has been in effect for more than 100 years and has been a failure for the entire time? Isn't it time to think differently?**

DHS is committed to creating innovating solutions for reducing homelessness in NYC. Commissioner Taylor's 4 Point Plan outlines DHS' new multi-pronged approach to homelessness.

- 47) What rules are shelter residents expected to abide by in terms of curfew, visitors, drug behavior, and criminal activity?**

DHS facilities have a curfew of 10:00pm with exceptions made for working clients who may return to the facility after curfew. All clients are asked to abide by the curfew. Alcohol and substance abuse usage is prohibited on site at DHS Facilities. DHS reports all incidents of alleged criminal behavior to NYPD for investigation. No visitors are allowed on site.

- 48) Why was the community not consulted beforehand?**



The Community Board Members and Elected Officials were notified as expeditiously as possible. As previously mentioned, DHS is experiencing a dire capacity crisis in NYC. DHS has a legal and moral obligation to provide shelter to each man, woman and child who is deemed eligible.

49) How the job placement for these displaced adults?

Samaritan Village works closely with the clients on job placement opportunities.