



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin, Chair / Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

TO: All Board Members
FROM: Douglas Montgomery, Douglaston Zoning Committee Chair
Eileen Miller, Health & Human Services Committee Chair
DATE: January 13, 2021
RE: Siting of Homeless Shelter at 243-02 Northern Blvd. Douglaston

On Tuesday, January 12, 2021, a joint meeting of the Douglaston Zoning and Health & Human Services Committees held a meeting via Zoom teleconference regarding the siting of a homeless shelter at 243-02 Northern Blvd.

Present

Douglas Montgomery, Zoning Committee Chair

Eileen Miller, Health & Human Services Committee Chair

Michael Budabin, Board Chair

Christine Haider, 1st Vice Chair

Victor Dadras, Committee Member, 2nd Vice Chair

Henry Euler, Committee Member, 3rd Vice Chair

Douglaston Zoning Committee Members Adriana Aviles, Susan Cerezo, Elias Fillas, Rosemarie Guidice, Bernard Haber, Yosef Lee, Jyothi Sriram and Sean Walsh, non-board committee member.

Health & Human Services Committee Members Susan Cerezo, Sharon Chin, Carmen Collado, Albert Galatan, Fleur Martino, and Beryl Bush-Bain, non-board committee member.

CB11 Board Members Ocelia Claro, Mary Donahue, Christina Scherer, Paul DiBenedetto, Laura James, Lander Bravo, Ben Turner, Akshar Patel and Joan Garippa

CB11 Staff

Joseph Marziliano, District Manager

Jane Bentivenga, Community Coordinator

Christina Coutinho, Community Associate

Other

Amanda Nasner, Queens Borough Director, NYC Dept. of Homeless Services (NYC DHS)

Mitchell Netburn, Alicia McFarlane, John Iamatteo, Michelle Demott and Jerry Heaney, Samaritan/Daytop Village

Captain John Portalatin, 111th Precinct

Luigi Galano, P.O., 111th Precinct

Various representatives of local elected officials

Mr. Budabin called the meeting to order and explained the procedure that will be followed. He introduced Amanda Nasner who gave a brief overview of the explanation of Mayor de Blasio's Turning the Tide initiative which places people experiencing homeless in borough-based shelters rather than hotels or cluster sites. Their goal is to open 90 shelters. This shelter will house women 50 years of age and older. She stated that people from the CB11 area will be given priority. This shelter is expected to open late in 2021. They will be making some renovations to the building.

Ms. Nasner introduced Mitchell Netburn from Samaritan Village who stated that they have been operating shelters and have been good neighbors for 60 years. They started in Queens. He said they operate facilities in all five boroughs, Suffolk County and a few northern NY counties. Their goal is to address whatever the cause of their homelessness is and get them into permanent housing as soon as possible. Mr. Netburn advised that a Community Advisory Board (CAB) will be established. At this point, Jerry Heaney, also from Samaritan Village, informed everyone that this site will be a 72-bed facility for women 50 and older who have been referred to them from NYC DHS. The average stay is about one year. They will have case management on site, social workers, recreational programs and cooking facilities. There will be dorm-style accommodations with rooms for eight to 12 occupants. There will be cameras throughout the facility and outside as well and 24-hour security will be provided. There is a 10 p.m. curfew. Room checks will be conducted. Ms. Nasner said all clients go through an assessment. Mr. Netburn said a former NYPD officer is their director of security. Ms. Nasner added that a 24-hour hotline number will be provided.

At this point in the proceedings, Mr. Budabin asked Mr. Marziliano to read two letters into the record; one from Westmoreland Association and the other from St. Anastasia Roman Catholic Church/Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy. (Copies of these letters are attached.) Each letter covered many queries and concerns.

Ms. Nasner responded to many of the queries. She said the CAB could be formed right away, and St. Anastasia/Divine Wisdom representatives, and their input would be welcomed. They would also want representatives from local civic associations and the NYPD. They would like 15-20 people on the CAB. NYS regulates the required square footage. There is no on-site parking. Mr. Heaney stated a large van will be assigned to the facility. Clients will not have their own vehicles. There will be a daily schedule; workshops are offered, job-related assistance etc. There is no medical staff on-site; however, they will refer those who need medical assistance to local offices. There will be offices but no rooms for overnight staff. Mr. Heaney added there is only operational staff overnight. Clients are not allowed to have visitors. There are no walk-ins; however, they are used as cooling and heating centers in the summer and winter months. Ms. Nasner stated NYC DHS conducted outreach in accordance with New York State's "right to shelter" law. Oversight of the facility will be handled by NYC DHS. Ms. Nasner also stated that clients need to abide by their good neighbor policy. If there is a problem with a client, NYC DHS will find a better-suited facility for that person.

Mr. Montgomery opened the floor to questions from CB11 Board Members starting with members of the Health & Human Services Committee. Mrs. Miller inquired about the policy not to get people out of the facility daily. Mr. Heaney replied that staff encourages clients to get up, go into a day room, see their case manager, seek housing etc. Mr. Galatan asked

if a contract to redevelop the building had been signed and if this is a “done deal”. The contract has not yet been signed. However, they will be occupying the property; NYC DHS goes through a different procurement process than other City agencies. Mr. Galatan also asked about smoking. There will be a designated area for smoking; it will be on the property, not be in front of the building. Ms. Chin asked about the facility being senior women only. Will that change in the future? There are currently no plans to change that. Ms. Cerezo inquired as to their projected budget and is it likely they will renew with the same operator in the future? Ms. Nasner will need to follow up regarding the budget. She will share a budget breakdown. However, she did state that this is more cost-effective compared to using hotels. She is not sure who will pay for the renovations. The City is not purchasing this property. Samaritan Village has a lease agreement with the developer. It is possible there could be a different operator that could take over in five to 10 years. Ms. Collado asked about safety for the clients and the community when they are out of the building. Mr. Netburn said staff will conduct perimeter walks and camera surveillance will be in place. Mr. Heaney said loitering is a common topic that they work on constantly with the clients. Residents can always call the 24-hour hotline. Mrs. Haider asked about security procedures. She also asked what the clients will be doing if not attending programs during the day. There will be 24-hour security on three shifts. If they cannot handle a situation on site, 911 will be called. Mr. Heaney said they have an array of workshops which includes job/vocational training. Some will be referred to outside services as well. Mr. Euler inquired about the building itself. Will clients have their own rooms? How many bathrooms will there be? Will the footprint of the building be increased? Rooms will vary from eight to 12 occupants. There is one shower and sink for every 10 people which is the State standard. The footprint of the building will remain the same. There will be an extension made to the front of the building that will not impede the sidewalk. It will be fenced in.

Mrs. Claro asked how Samaritan Village was selected and were other providers considered? Ms. Nasner said the selection was made through an open Request For Proposal (RFP) process. Mr. Montgomery commented the Samaritan Village is the developer; he asked who the new owner is. He also inquired about the no visitor policy as many of the women, who are 50 and older, have children and grandchildren they want to visit with. The owner is an LLC in partnership with Samaritan Village. Children are not allowed into the site due to liability. They may create a visiting space but that is not encouraged. Clients can get weekend or overnight passes so they can visit family. Mr. Haber asked if the floor plans are available and what the lower level will be used for. Ms. Nasner and Samaritan Village representatives will discuss if they can release them to CB11. Mr. Heaney stated the lower level will be the kitchen and dining area. Mr. Fillas inquired as to the name of the developer/owner. Ms. Aviles interjected and stated that the name of the owner is listed as Bayrock Capital/BR Northern Partners LLC. Mr. Fillas requested a review of the process for selecting this site as it seems notification was made after the site selection. Ms. Nasner again went over NYS DHS’ process for site selection. She also stated that letters were sent to CB11 and local, elected officials asking for recommendations for sites. No sites were given in response. Mr. Marziliano confirmed it has been the policy of the CB11 not to do the site-searching for NYC DSS. Ms. Aviles spoke about the timeline of notification. She inquired as to the number of residents that will come from the district. There should be a nurse on-site, especially now with Covid-19. Who will monitor the 24-hour hotline number? How long is the contract with Samaritan Village? Will there be Access-a- Ride? Ms. Nasner will know the details about the number of the residents when they are closer to opening; however, they will consult their database. Clients will be those from CB11 first, then surrounding areas in Queens and then it will be opened Citywide. There will be testing on site and temperatures will be

taken. If an individual shows signs of Covid-19 and/or tests positive, they will be quarantined off site. Mr. Netburn said the vaccination will be offered to clients; but it is not required. Mr. Heaney said the calls to the hotline go directly to the front desk at the site. Ms. Nasner stated if a client qualifies for Access-a-Ride, they can use that. Mr. Walsh stated that his civic association, Douglaston Civic Association, of which he is President, was not contacted about possible sites. He does not believe this building can be expanded. He wanted to know why they are putting 72 people in this site which will be quite crowded. He also inquired if Samaritan Village had signed a contract with the building owner. Ms. Nasner again explained the process of siting, the NYS regulations and the benefits of shelters as opposed to hotels or cluster sites. Ms. McFarlane stated they have not yet signed a lease but have a letter of intent in place. Mr. Marziliano asked Ms. Nasner to confirm if the notification policy is 30 days prior to opening. Ms. Nasner confirmed that and added that it is a policy not a law. Mr. Lee asked if clients will have devices so that shelter personnel can contact them when they leave the property in the event of a residential complaint. The perimeter of the grounds will be patrolled. Mrs. Guidice asked how the women are supposed to get housing if they are not working. Do they give them referrals for housing and jobs? What about domestic violence victims? Can the facility be downsized to preserve their dignity? Mr. Heaney stated they have housing specialists who will assist clients with that. Some will move out with money from employment; others with money they get from SSI or SSD. Still others may get vouchers for housing from the City. This will not be a shelter for abused women (they may have dealt with domestic violence in the past). Mrs. Guidice added that public transportation is very sparse in Douglaston. Clients can be transported in their van. Ms. Nasner stated this is a transitional facility; not a long-term solution. Mr. Budabin inquired as to training for the on-site staff. Ms. Nasner said they will get special training. NYPD formerly oversaw the security. NYS DHS will now be contracting security out.

Mr. Marziliano posed a couple of the questions that were received by CB11 that were not previously addressed. A resident asked what percentage of women over 65 in NYC shelters have treatable mental illnesses or addictions; how is that issue addressed so it does not pose a problem for the surrounding community? Ms. Nasner said she will follow-up to see what information she can disseminate regarding that issue. Another question received by CB11 is what is the ratio of staff to client on each shift? Mr. Heaney said that the ratio for caseworkers is 1:25, housing specialists 1:40, social workers is 1:60, there will also be operation staff in addition to security staff. They will be contracting out the maintenance as well. Overall, the ratio will be approximately 3:10. Mr. Netburn added that there will be more staff on during the day shift. How many shelters does Samaritan Village operate in Queens? Mr. Netburn said they operate the Pan Am Hotel site on Queens Blvd. as a family shelter. Mr. Heaney added they operate a shelter in south Queens for 65 families and a single shelter in Flushing at the YMCA. They also operate two temporary shelters in Long Island City.

Mr. Montgomery announced there will be a follow-up meeting regarding this site on Thursday, January 28, 2021. He requested the following information from Ms. Nasner: who the LLC is that purchased the property/the name of the developer, the plans for the interior of the shelter and the operating budget. He also stated that there were over 250 people in attendance at this meeting; if anyone attending did not feel their concern was addressed, he advised emailing it to CB11 so we can get the answer. Mrs. Miller thanked all for attending and looks forward to the next meeting. Mr. Budabin stated CB11 will be continuing engagement regarding this issue. Please feel free to email CB11. He reiterated there will be a follow-up meeting on January 28,

2021 and this will not be the last time CB11 will be discussing this matter. Mr. Budabin expressed his agreement that a CAB can be established right away.

Respectfully submitted 1/14/2021