

Sean E. McCarthy

Village Architect

sean mccarthy

From: Dan Rutledge [danrutledge@optonline.net]
Sent: Sunday, March 24, 2013 10:01 PM
To: sean mccarthy
Subject: Open Door Application

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**BUILDING DEPT.
VILLAGE OF SLEEPY HOLLOW**

Mr. McCarthy,

You were kind enough to forward a previous letter of mine to the Board. I would greatly appreciate your doing that again this time. Thank you in advance.

Dan Rutledge

Dear Members of the Sleepy Hollow Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing at the conclusion of the public hearing regarding the proposed change of use for the Open Door Family Medical Center to move its operation to 300 North Broadway. Thank you for this opportunity. For almost a year I have been coming to the meetings of both the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals in which the Open Door proposal to expand has been debated. The patience of the Boards has to be commended as it can safely be said that it has all been said, we're just waiting for everyone to say it. I would ask the Board to examine the substance of the negative comments regarding the proposal. Of particular note is the comment at one of the meetings by one person who stated that her husband did not want to come home from his work day and find those people roaming around the street and then there was the letter circulated by the anti Open Door proposal faction which made a counterproposal for the building being used for a charter school among other possibilities. This came from the same crowd who were so concerned that children would be placed in jeopardy if they are being taken to the new Open Door facility; somehow children going to a charter school will be impervious to the same problems. I highly doubt any of the board members share the feelings expressed by the residents whose opinions were expressed in those statements, but it would be quite regretful if these obvious prejudices were seriously entertained.

I don't wish to appear presumptuous with my interpretation of what I believe the purpose of the Zoning Board Appeals function is, but it seems to me that it exists to entertain proposals that would be counter to various regulations the village has enacted to provide for orderly operations. Of significant import is the function that would be served by allowing such a proposal despite its not meeting some of the guidelines for which you are responsible. You have heard the statistics regarding the number of residents the Open door serves. The Village's web site states there are 9000 residents of Sleepy Hollow; some of the other sites say there are closer to 10000. In any event, there are around 4000 people from Sleepy Hollow who receive their medical care from the Open Door making the Open Door's area of coverage anywhere from 40 to 45 percent of the village's population, a truly sizable plurality.

There has been extensive discussion regarding the lack of parking at the 300 North Broadway location. One of the board members at a past hearing stated that he was pleased when the applicant for a variance was willing to assist in correcting a problem that would be faced if such a variance were to be granted. I believe Open Door has been more than accommodating in their efforts to be a good neighbor. It has been demonstrated that the lack of patient parking simply isn't a problem as the vast majority of the patients do not drive to the facility. The only difficulty that could be faced is from the lack of staff parking. Open

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Door has attempted to address this situation by arranging staff parking away from the site even though the streets around the facility are public thoroughfares; this will address the concerns of the neighbors that there will be no place for them to park. The relocation of Open Door will not negatively impact anyone's property value. Open Door is not proposing putting up neon signs identifying themselves; they are not opening a casino or a sewage treatment plant. Indeed, it might actually be advantageous for the Webber Park residents to have a medical facility that could save them from going to an emergency room for some sorts of treatment.

There was some discussion concerning the possible increases in revenue the Open Door might be receiving with the projected increase in its capacity to serve the community. I haven't any idea of the levels of their income, but, while they no doubt have a decent amount of income, there is no one getting rich off us patients. For the most part, patients such as myself are in the lower income brackets and are simply not sources of great revenue. The "cart before the horse" concept of buying the building before getting approvals to enact the proposed renovations was also raised. I haven't any doubt the Open Door did not foresee the level of debate this would engender. There was an implied question that the Open Door was acting arrogantly in this action. The Open Door just isn't that sort of organization. It has been operating in Sleepy Hollow for almost thirty years, providing medical care for the same sort of population and, from what I can see, has been a real asset to the community and a very good neighbor in the locations in which they have been. There is no reason to think they would be anything different in the future.

Lastly, it should not be discounted that the Open Door will not only be continuing its current function, but, with the move to a larger facility, will be expanding its purview. By cosponsoring the well documented Primary Care Residents Program with Phelps Hospital they will be assisting in addressing a looming problem in the medical coverage not only in Sleepy Hollow, but also throughout the rest of Westchester and indeed the country at large. These Residents will be spending three years here improving their skills; not all of them will necessarily remain here, but I would be willing to bet many will. They will be familiar with other physicians and facilities throughout the area and will be well situated to carry on with their careers after their time as Residents. They will be able to move into other practices in the area; thus Open Door will be not only providing physicians for its growing patient population, but also will be assisting in answering the expected demand for other practices in the area, practices that are not equipped to supply the training these new doctors require, but will be able to benefit from this program's existence.

While the proposed solutions are not ideal, when one weighs the positive outcomes to a large portion of the community, both immediate and long term, against the minimal negative impacts it will have on the community, I believe it is obvious that the pluses far outnumber the minuses. Thus, I would seriously hope the Board would stress the big picture in its considerations, not be overly occupied in the minor issues that have been addressed in detail and find in favor of the request of the Open door to relocate its Sleepy Hollow operations from 80 Beekman Avenue to 300 North Broadway. Thank you for taking the time to read this rather lengthy letter, and thank you for your consideration.

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