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DEC 19 2012

BUILDING DEPT.
VILLAGE OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

December 19, 2012

To the ZBA Board Members:

Unfortunately, I cannot attend your meeting tonight but I respectfully request that my written comments be made part of the public record. No doubt I will lose a few friends over it.

I have followed the Planning and Zoning Board deliberations related to Open Door's proposed move from Beekman Avenue to New Broadway with a growing sense of concern. Let me state right up front that I support their proposed use of the New Broadway building, and let me share with you the reasons why:

First, and perhaps foremost, is a moral one; Open Door provides medical services to a large segment of our community that has traditionally been medically underserved. I applaud their work. Open Door has an impeccable reputation within the medical community and this has been recognized through their close working relationship with Phelps Memorial Hospital and through the recent, and very rare, approval of the new residency program in primary medicine. As someone who has worked in the healthcare field for more than three decades, I can assure you that this is, indeed, a great honor. I shouldn't have to, but I will explain that over the past several decades there have been too few primary care physicians trained, and they are desperately needed both here in Westchester and throughout the country. It makes sense to encourage Open Door to continue to serve our community, and many others through the training program which will impact tens of thousands of people in the future.

Second is a more parochial concern about our Village. Open Door currently operates on Beekman Avenue. Too often I've heard comments from my fellow citizens that the "inner village" needs to be cleaned up, that it's a mess. These comments mask a less benevolent feeling that there are too many recent immigrants, or worse, thinly veiled racism. I won't dignify those comments with a direct response, except to say that if we want change within the inner village, we've got to think straight. Without the move of a major medical facility from the very center of the main street of our downtown area, no one can honestly believe that Beekman Avenue will enjoy a rebirth as a vibrant shopping destination. It makes sense to encourage Open Door to move, and there just aren't any realistic alternatives to the proposed location within the Village.

Third, I'd like to remind those with short memories of the atrocious state of the building in question, not all that long ago. In 2006, the Village Board questioned those on the Planning and Zoning Boards who spoke against the former owner/developer improving the property. In the opinion of the Village Board at that time, several influential individuals on the Planning and Zoning Boards had, through their imposition of never-ending bureaucratic hurdles to at least two owners, forced the building to sit vacant, falling further and further into disrepair. Although the property was subsequently improved, the owner at the time left in disgust, and now it sits empty once again. It makes sense to put this site to productive use serving the community, and Open Door has offered to do just that.

Fourth, I would encourage the ZBA to ignore those who organized within the adjacent neighborhood around a concept that they could stall Open Door, force the value of the property

down through their actions, and then buy it on the cheap (or worse, have the Village buy it on their behalf), in order to have the Webber Park Association “rent it out to businesses that we like.” I have to assume that you on the ZBA have seen the widely distributed email suggesting this approach (if not, I’ve attached it). I am personally offended by it and I hope you are too. Of course, some of the concerns of the immediate neighbors are heart-felt, real and should be considered carefully. But those concerns must be weighed against the concerns and needs of the entire Village, of which they are part, and from which they will benefit should your actions result in a positive outcome for the Village as a whole.

Finally, I feel compelled to comment on “the parking question,” which I believe to be absurd on its face. There is virtually no business in Sleepy Hollow that can rebuild or use existing space under the current zoning/parking restrictions. The restrictions have had the (perhaps) unintended consequence of stunting inner village development. In this particular application, the ZBA is asked to apply a standard unrelated to any reasonable assessment of the proposed use, and we certainly don’t need another traffic study or parade of experts to demonstrate that fact. The patients of Open Door are not the same as the patients of the medical groups located a few hundred yards north on Broadway. While people in the “Manors” routinely own two, three, or four vehicles, people living within the inner village typically do not. As someone who has spent a good deal of time on Beekman Avenue, I’ve not seen any evidence of a traffic problem in front of Open Door, or for that matter, a lack of available meter parking in the immediate vicinity during most hours of the day. Most patients walk in or are dropped off. This issue is, for me, a canard.

The ZBA is charged with helping to manage change and growth within our Village. I understand that you have a big responsibility and that there are many, often conflicting interests playing out. But in this specific case, the choice before you is clear. Open Door has carefully and thoughtfully responded to every challenge placed before them, both in front of the Planning Board and now the Zoning Board of Appeals. If you want the Village to remain as it is – don’t approve Open Door’s request; perhaps your decision will withstand legal challenge (though I am very concerned it won’t). But if you believe that everyone in this community should have reasonable access to health services, that the inner Village must change, and that our Village should grow while remaining vibrant in its diversity, then it just makes sense on so many levels to approve this application. I urge you to do so, and to do so expeditiously.

David Schroedel
487 Munroe Avenue
Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591

From: Webber Park <webber_park@yahoo.com>
To: Webber Park <webber_park@yahoo.com>
Sent: Fri, Apr 13, 2012 6:25 am
Subject: More regarding Site on NB and Open Door

Here is another email from a neighbor regarding the site on New Broadway/Broadway and Open Door

From: michaelkampen@gmx.net
> Subject: Re: * IMPORTANT: OPEN DOOR MEETING TONIGHT!!!! PLEASE ATTEND*
> To: becky_avrin@hotmail.com
>
> Becky,
>
> I found planning board minutes (see attached).
>
> There it says "The Chair stated that the use of a medical facility is prohibited in the approved site plan."
>
> If that is indeed the case, the open door clinic should not be approved.
>
> Maybe all the interested people in the neighborhood can meet and discuss?
>
> I think you know best who is interested. Could you share this e-mail with others?
> The obvious question is what to do with this property if the Open Door Clinic cannot be operated there.
>
> Let's do some brainstorming and I throw in the first idea:
>
> Could Webber Park Association buy it and use it as they see fit? Clubhouse? Rent it out to businesses that we like? Charter School? Science lab for our children (and open to others by application)?
>
> Sounds maybe crazy but think about it:
>
> 1) Philipse Manor has their Beach Club, Hudson Harbour has their clubhouse (actually most "developments" have), we would have our center that we use as we can see fit
>
> 2) We should be able to buy it at a very low price because they just don't find a good buyer for it and if the mortgage is split over hundred families and if part of it can be rented out, it might be financially feasible
>
> 3) Interest rates are very low and it would become a valuable asset for the neighborhood
>
> 4) Maybe the Village can help us with a bonded purchase for even lower interest rates (ask Jen)
>
> 5) This kind of asset would actually increase the value of each residence in Webber Park and not decrease it as likely through the establishment of an Open Door Clinic
>
> What do you think?
>
> Have a good day
>
> Michael
>
>