

Bronx Community Board No. 8
Public Hearing Conducted by the Health and Hospital Committee
Monday, November 9th, 2009
As Required Under the Padavan Law

Present from CB 8: Maria Khury, Chairperson, Tom Durham, Alma Fana, Steven Froot, Beverly Fettman, Bridget Maybury, Joyce Pilsner, Damian McShane, I. William Stone, Martin Wolpoff, Herb Young

Present for Leake and Watts: Alan Mucatel, Executive Director, Kathy Cucinell, Director, Sonji Phillips

Present from the Community: Matt McDevitt, College of Mt St Vincent, Stephen McConnell

The present hearing was called to consider the request by Leake and Watts to establish 3 residences for the developmentally disabled to be certified by the State Office of Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

Chairperson Khury called on Mr. McConnell, a community resident, who expressed concern over the establishment of such facilities given the activities around two residences located on Delafield Avenue. No one present was aware of the sponsor agency. However, Ms. Khury promised to investigate and contact the sponsor agency.

Prior to the presentation, Bill Stone offered a synopsis of the Padavan Law and options available to the committee and ultimately Community Board No. 8. Those options are:

1. approve the proposal,
2. deny it and suggest possible alternate sites,
3. deny it on the basis that the inclusion of such facility, in conjunction with other similar state licensed facilities would alter the nature and character of the community, or
4. allow the 40-day letter to run its course and, in effect, approve the site, having taken no other available action.

Chairperson Khury called on Mr. Mucatel to provide details on the proposed residences. Mr. Mucatel had met with the Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee earlier in the month. He reiterated some of what had been presented and elaborated on several other factors.

1. Leake and Watts is a well-known child care facility located in Yonkers.
2. The addresses of the houses are 549, 545 and 543 Depeyster Street (also known as West 265th Street). Although the property is adjacent to the Leake and Watts campus in Yonkers, it is geographically located in the Bronx.

3. The residences are surrounded by the College of Mt. St. Vincent, the parking lot of the Hyatt senior residence, Leake and Watts, and Fay Park (a public park).
4. There are four houses located at the site. They have been owned by Leake and Watts for generations. They have been used for other residential support purposes. Three of them will be used for the residences.
5. There will be 7 residents in one house and 4 in each of the two others (15 residents in all).
6. Two of the facilities will be made handicap accessible.
7. The facilities will each have 24 hour/7 day per week staffing, although some staff will be shared.
8. Most of the residents have already been selected. All of them are Bronx residents who are aging out of school facilities.
9. There is a major screening process for residents that includes working with staff and fellow-residents to ensure proper social and developmental matches.
10. Selected staff also go through an extensive screening process which includes all-day group interviews and work-related exercises.
11. Residents will attend day work facilities and be picked up by agency buses/vans.
12. Employees of the residences, as well as those who work at Leake and Watts are advised to walk on Valentine Avenue and not take any short cuts through private property.
13. Parking is available at the three residences.

Following a question and answer period, the chair declared the public hearing closed and called for a meeting of the committee. It was made clear to the public that the committee was serving in an advisory position relative to the board. Only the board could take official action. The committee met and, after a brief period of discussion, voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposal to the full board.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Wolpoff