

December 5, 2005

Dear Neighbors,

I am writing to share with you a summary of two meetings held over the last several weeks regarding the Safe Haven project. On November 16, 2005, the Alexandria Community Services Board (ACSB) and staff met with neighbors of 115 North Patrick Street, as well as several other interested individuals. On November 21, 2005, staff made a presentation on the Safe Haven project to the Upper King Street Civic Association. What follows is a summary of key issues addressed at the two meetings.

November 16, 2005 Community Meeting Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to share the revised architectural design addressing concerns raised by the neighbors and the members of the Board of Architectural Review (B.A.R) at the October 5, 2005 B.A.R hearing. In addition, Board and staff entertained questions from the neighbors, as well as heard from current neighbors of the Board's Men's Recovery Home in Del Ray. A total of seven CSB staff attended along with the project architect, a CSB member, a staff member from the City's Department of General Services, and 16 citizens, some of whom were neighbors of the 115 N. Patrick site.

- Staff presented the revised plans submitted to the B.A.R on November 7, 2005 for the December 7, 2005 B.A.R public hearing. The preliminary draft interior plans were also displayed in response to an earlier request. The architect reviewed the changes that addressed all concerns raised by the B.A.R and neighbors. These included neighbors' privacy, residents smoking, increased pedestrian traffic in the walkway and the location of a second exit door on the south side of the building. To address these concerns, a roof top promenade is proposed with four to six feet high parapet walls. The promenade would be set back three feet from the parapet wall and would be surrounded by a 42-inch high railing. The promenade is not visible from any public sight line. There will be no smoking allowed from the promenade, and the promenade would be closed between dusk and dawn. The emergency egress door on the south side was moved further down the walkway so that it will not be directly across from a neighbor's window. The other south side door also will be used for emergency egress only. Residents and staff will enter the building by the front door. An indoor smoking room has been created for the eight residents of the second floor, reducing the number of residents smoking on the back patio to four. The architect solicited input on the height of the parapet wall and neighbors expressed a desire for the alternative that provided maximum privacy.
- Neighbors raised concerns about the B.A.R approval process, correctness and fairness of Planning and Zoning staff decisions, and the lack of a formal public opportunity for neighbors to provide input into the decision making process on the siting of the project. One neighbor indicated that Planning and Zoning staff told him that the item was not on the December 7, 2005 docket and that he was not able to obtain copies of the application or drawings as he was promised by staff. (Staff subsequently determined that the item is

still on the B.A.R docket for December 7, 2005 and that plans were available to citizens upon request. This information was communicated to those who attended the November 16 meeting). Board and staff clarified that a multi-family residence is allowed by right in a commercial downtown (CD) zone. Neighbors were referred to Planning and Zoning staff, specifically Eileen Fogarty, Director of Planning and Zoning, to answer questions about use definitions and hearing requirements. The Board has met or exceeded all zoning requirements. Mary Riley, ACSB Chair, explained the Board's Housing Plan, siting, and notification expectations to ensure relatively equitable distribution of special needs housing throughout the City. The Safe Haven site is on the border of the Board's first and second siting priority areas. Although the policy does not require notification of neighbors for this type of project, the Board notified neighbors within two days of City Council's approval of the use of the site. The Board must follow Fair Housing policy. Several neighbors stated that this is not an appropriate site for the project because of the proximity to a residential neighborhood with families and children and the impact of residents on local businesses and tourism.

- There were multiple questions from neighbors relating to concerns about property values, program operations and oversight, and staff's ability to protect the neighbors from harm and guarantee safety. Staff addressed each issue and agreed to put in writing that the Board would limit the project to a maximum of 12 residents. Neighbors of the Men's Recovery Home, which serves a very similar population as the Safe Haven, spoke about their positive experience with the home and residents. Both neighbors stated that there have been no problems or incidents. One neighbor also stated that his property value has skyrocketed.
- In discussion of safety concerns, a neighbor referenced crime statistics that had been included in FOIA documents. Some neighbors had interpreted these statistics to be a report of criminal incidents committed by CSB consumers who attended the Clubhouse. Staff clarified that those crime statistics reflected the total number of crimes in a police reporting area around 115 N. Patrick area, and were not incidents related to Clubhouse members.
- Neighbors asked about the specific location of Alexandria's existing homeless residents. Staff replied that this can be a transient population within the City and one that, by definition, does not have a fixed address. Staff and Board subsequently passed on to neighbors what information was available in regard to locations of homeless individuals, based on the January 2005 homeless count.
- Several neighbors raised questions regarding the cost of the project, as well as the Federal government's consideration of significant cuts in Medicaid spending and the effect on the project's budget. The architect provided some information on cost estimates. Concerns were expressed about the wisdom of the large expenditure to serve so few residents.

November 21, 2005 Upper King Street Civic Association Regular Monthly Meeting Summary

Staff were contacted by the president of the Upper King Street Civic Association to make a presentation about the Safe Haven project at the November monthly meeting. Five staff

members and one CSB member presented and answered questions about the project for an audience of approximately 50 people.

- Staff presented an overview of the project and the architectural plans were presented to the group. Changes in the roof deck were pointed out, including the set back from the parapet wall. This will provide privacy for the residents and the neighbors. The wheelchair ramp in the front will be removed and the handicap entrance will be at the front of the building.
- There were several questions that staff answered regarding the program site selection, city residency, length of stay in the program, characteristics of the residents, program operations, and the relationship of the CSB with other homeless service providers in the City.
- Several neighbors voiced support for the project.
- An attendee asked for information about the psychiatric diagnoses that residents of the Safe Haven might have and staff provided general information about the diagnostic categories.
- Staff informed the group that the plans were available at Planning and Zoning and that the item was on the December 7, 2005 docket at 7:30 p.m. for the Board of Architectural Review. Further information about the Board and the Safe Haven project can be found on the City's web site at <http://alexandriava.gov/mhmrsa>.

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (703) 838-5011 or by email at carol.layer@alexandriava.gov.

Sincerely,

Carol Layer
Director, Extended Care Services Division