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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE  
NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

[www.cb2manhattan.org](http://www.cb2manhattan.org)

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: [info@cb2manhattan.org](mailto:info@cb2manhattan.org)

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### Social Services

The Social Services Committee of Community Board No. 2, Manhattan held its regular monthly meeting by Zoom on September 22, 2020, at 6:30pm.

Committee Members Present: Susanna Aaron, Chair; Keen Berger, Wayne Kawadler, Adam Zeldin

Committee Members Absent With Notice: Cathy Sullivan,

Committee Members Absent Without Notice:

Other CB2 Members Present: Carter Booth, Chair; William Benesh

CB2 Staff Present:

Public Members Present: Jessica Aaron, Rachel Yarmolinsky

Public Members Absent With Notice: Jessica Aaron

Public Members Absent Without Notice: Chris Leonard

Elected Officials' Representatives Present:

Patrice Comerford (Council Speaker Corey Johnson)

### Agenda:

1. \*Update from Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS) on the development of the Safe Haven planned for 112-114 West 14th St.

Our meeting was attended by representatives of CUCS and the Manhattan Outreach Consortium:

Joe DeGenova, President and CEO

Doug James, Chief Operating Officer

Abbey Nyamekye, Chief Administrative Officer

Tracey Erhardt, Program Director (who will be running Paul's Place)

Erica Strang, Director, Manhattan Outreach Consortium

Jennie Drossman, Director, Goddard Riverside Downtown

Our committee did not write a resolution.

### REPORT:

Some background on CUCS: The organization was born at Columbia University in the late 1980s. Since then, it has been dedicated to the homeless and formerly homeless, helping them to get housing and set goals. CUCS provides a continuum of services, from street outreach to transitional housing to aiding access to permanent housing. CUCS operates 2500 units of

permanent supportive housing and also provides employment services, psychiatric care and primary medical care. It also trains 14,000 people each year in how to provide these services with the highest quality possible. It aims to be a good neighbor in a mutually beneficial way.

The facility on West 14<sup>th</sup> Street will be called Paul's Place and is scheduled to open mid-December, 2020, with 40-full-time's worth of staff (the actual number of staff will be larger as per diem workers will work weekend and evening shifts). Each shift will have three in clinical staff, plus staff for security and food. Staffing is fuller during normal business hours of Mon-Fri, 9a-5p. The facility is funded through a contract with NYC Department for Homeless Services. Construction on the site is continuing though it suffered delays. It was able to continue through the Covid-19 lockdown because it is considered essential construction. CUCS expects to have a temporary Certificate of Occupancy by late November, which will allow it to staff the facility. Paul's Place will operate two programs under one roof:

- 1) The Safe Haven will provide transitional housing in the form of individual bedrooms for 24 adults, who will be referred to the center either through NYC's Department for Homeless Services or through the outreach teams of the Manhattan Outreach Coalition. Staff will help these adults work toward permanent housing, recognizing that the clients will be in different stages of this process. Some will not yet be psychologically ready for permanent housing, while others will already have ID cards and paperwork and will have begun the 2010E process for obtaining housing.
- 2) The drop-in center will run 24 hours/day, seven days per week. The aim of this program is to work toward permanent housing. CUCS provided a scenario to illustrate the services that will be available: "Let's say 'Joe' walks in. A safety specialist will greet him. He will be asked if he is sleeping on the street. He'll be asked if he had lunch, and will be invited to dine. The safety specialist will notify the intake social worker, who might assess that Joe could use medical attention. Joe may decide to leave. If he stays, staff might offer to replace his shoes. The nurse who brings him a new pair might examine the ulcer on his foot. Staff will try to engage him in conversation." The aim will be to carefully escalate the level of service a client will accept. The staff will be equipped to address health and mental health issues, and will be able to place client in a respite bed if the client desires one.

#### QUESTIONS:

What steps will be taken to ensure quality of life and safety in the community as a whole?

-CUCS practices what it calls a "good neighbor policy." This includes the following:

-The facility will be staffed 24/7. The reception desk will have a glass window, and cameras that will monitor activity up and down the street and within the building.

-The telephone at the facility will be answered in person.

-The facility will have a community Advisory Board that will meet regularly – frequently during the first six months or so, and as needed thereafter.

-CUCS began meeting with nearby residents three-four years ago, before it finalized its contract with DHS. It has met with nearby residents throughout the planning process and will continue to do so when the site is open for operations.

-The facility will have an open patio 12' x 16' on the rear of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to provide a place for gathering and smoking cigarettes so as to minimize congregation on the street. The patio will be staffed.

-There will be a curfew for the terrace's use, which will be monitored and modified as needed to minimize smoking on the street.

- The roof is not part of the program and will be fenced off to prevent access.
- Drug and alcohol use is prohibited in the building. Clients are not permitted to solicit, loiter, steal, spit, litter, curse, play music, etc. These policies will be specified in the orientation materials each client receives.
- Clients who violate these rules can be denied services. Those who break the law will be reported to law enforcement.

#### How will clients hear of the Safe Haven?

Clients for the beds will be referred by the Manhattan outreach teams. Clients will hear of the facility by word of mouth and by other service providers.

#### How many people will be in the facility?

There will be no more than 24 guests in the Safe Haven portion. The full caseload in the drop-in center is 70-90 people, including about 20 in staff and 35-40 clients at one time. However, during the Covid-19 crisis, DHS requires a reduction of 50% in caseload.

#### Can people sleep in the drop-in center?

The drop-in center will have lounge chairs but not beds. Guests may sleep in the lounge chairs. They may also be referred to shelter, or may be placed in a respite bed, depending on their case. Respite beds are volunteer-run programs run by providers such as churches. Most of these are not currently operating because of the Covid-19 crisis.

#### Additional comments from CUCS representatives

While the Lucerne Hotel on the Upper West Side has received complaints, CUCS says that the Belnord, its facility in the same neighborhood, is not getting the same attention and received 20 complaints over a period of thirteen weeks. While the Luerne houses 300 people, the Belnord houses just 101 men. CUCS selected the site because it has an outdoor space. CUCS prefers not to run large shelters because it believes they're not able to run these well. "It's too hard to maintain community when a shelter gets that big." It strives to keep its clients busy with computers, TVs, activities, meetings with staff. Group activities are difficult because of Covid-19, but normally CUCS runs treatment groups on housing, mental and physical health issues.

Typically, a Safe Haven is most attractive to people who are near it. Self-selection shapes the type of guests that come to it. "We have to create an environment that is healthy for people. We work to create a therapeutic atmosphere. You can't have a scene like what some have described at Washington Square Park and make it work."

CUCS encourages neighborhood residents to interact with its clients and will look to the Advisory Council and residents for bridges to the wider community.