



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

January 19, 2011

Bonnie Stone
Executive Director
Women In Need
115 West 31st Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Re: Proposed Homeless Shelter at 341 West 51st Street

Dear Ms. Stone:

At the December 8, 2010 meeting of the Manhattan Community Board 4's (CB4) Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use (C/HKLU) Committee, Marilyn Laves and Ophelia Smith from Women In Need (WIN) presented WIN's preliminary plans to turn its building at 341 West 51st Street (the "Site") into a homeless shelter. The Board approves the use of the Site as a homeless shelter but with conditions regarding the size of the shelter and the condition of the building. While the Board approves this proposed project in concept, it cannot, however, support this shelter unless the capacity is reduced from 66 people to 49 people.

PROPOSED PROJECT

WIN is proposing to return the building to its previous use as a homeless shelter. Unlike WIN's other shelters that are designed to serve families, this shelter will only serve single, adult women who are mentally ill, chemically dependent per WIN's contract with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The shelter will serve 3 meals a day and provide a variety of social services including case management, alcohol and substance abuse counseling, and group therapy, with the goal of moving the shelter residents into permanent housing within 6 months of their arrival at the shelter. Referrals for the shelter will come only from DHS. Homeless women will go to one of the city's designated intake centers and from there they will get referred out to the WIN shelter. Services at the shelter will only be for the residents; no one will be coming in off the street for services at the building.

EXISTING BUILDING AND PROPOSED RESIDENT CAPACITY

The Site of the proposed shelter is a converted tenement with 5 floors and a walk-in basement. The building sits on a lot measuring approximately 25 x 100 feet with the building itself measuring approximately 25 x 80 feet. WIN is proposing to use the building as such:

- Basement
 - Meals and Group Sessions
 - The meals would be brought in the night before and the kitchen would be used only as a warming station
- First Floor
 - Front desk
 - Staff offices
 - 3 residential rooms
- Floors 2 through 5
 - Primarily residential floors
 - Each floor has an identical floor plan consisting of 7 residential rooms and one counselor's office
 - Each floor has one half bath and one full bath.
- The shelter has its own laundry facilities on site.

WIN has proposed that the shelter would have a capacity of 66 people. However, after taking a tour of the building, the Board cannot support this capacity. The 2 rooms in the front and the 2 rooms in the back of the residential floors could be shared by two persons. However, the 4 rooms in the middle of each floor contain only one window on an airshaft and are too small for sharing. Given the building's size and layout constraints, and its original occupancy as a shelter of 36 residents, the Board simply cannot conceive of housing an additional 30 people in the same space. We would support occupancy as follows:

	Number of Double Rooms	Number of Single Rooms	Occupancy
First Floor	2	1	5
Second Floor	4	3	11
Third Floor	4	3	11
Fourth Floor	4	3	11
Fifth Floor	4	3	11
Total			49

The Board believes that the shelter should house no more than 49 residents at any given time.

EXISTING BUILDING CONDITION AND PROPOSED RENOVATION

While the building itself is structurally sound, it was last renovated in 1987. The Board acknowledges that when the building was renovated, it was renovated to the standards of that time, and it has been well-maintained since. However, those standards are not today's standards. Both the full and the half bathrooms need to be fully renovated as they are not accessible to the mobility impaired and in general disrepair. In general, the Board would appreciate if the building was made less institutional and more residential and welcoming. The Board expects that the building will be fully furnished for its occupants.

PROGRAM STAFFING

The staffing structure will consist of:

- Social Service Staff
 - 1 Program Director
 - 1 Social Services Supervisor
 - 3 Case Managers
 - 1 who will be a Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC)
 - 1 Housing Specialist
- Maintenance Staff
 - 1 Facility Manager
 - 2 Maintenance Workers
 - 2 Porters
- Security Staff
 - 1 Security Manager
 - 4 Shift Supervisors
 - 10 Residential Aides
 - 1 Per Diem Residential Aide

Security coverage will be 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and there will be a Shift Supervisor on every shift. Additionally, there will be security cameras, a curfew, and a good neighbor policy.

WIN is a well-known and well-respected not-for-profit organization. They successfully run 6 shelters, 226 units of supportive housing, and a substance abuse clinic across the boroughs and formerly ran a successful family shelter at this Site. While the Board still has some concerns that need to be addressed about the abundance of similar services nearby, the schedule of the delivery trucks, and the lack of engagement with the West 51st Street Block Association, we are nevertheless looking forward to working with WIN as they moved forward with their proposed shelter.

The Board looks forward to working with both WIN and DHS to come to a final agreement on the number of beds that can be reasonably supported in this building and the operational issues that have been discussed to ensure that the shelter fits well in the block and the surrounding community.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Elisa Gerontianos, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee



Sarah Desmond, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee



Joe Restuccia
Co-Chair, Housing, Health
& Human Services Committee

[signed 1/19/11]

Barbara Davis
Co- Chair, Housing, Health
& Human Services Committee

cc: Marilyn Laves - WIN
Ophelia Smith - WIN
Seth Diamond - DHS
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
NYS Senator Thomas K. Duane
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer