

Housing Help

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PTA Hosts Housing-Project Forum

ABC Representatives On Hand To Explain Terms Of East Northport Settlement

By Rob Morrison

With concerns and frustrations still brewing over the proposed 155-unit affordable housing complex called Matthecock Court, at the corner of Pulaski and Elwood Roads in East Northport, A Better Community (ABC) Civic Association held an informational meeting at the Laurel Avenue School in Northport Monday, November 27.

Hosted by the Northport-East Northport School District PTA Council, ABC presented a 45-minute briefing on the affordable housing proposal and held a question-and-answer session for area residents in attempt to "get the facts out," according to PTA Council resident Sue Newton. The PTA is not taking a position on the issue, but Ms. Newton said they wanted to give the public the opportunity to get the right information.

The majority of residents at the meeting this week wanted to know what the impact of the project will have on the Northport-East Northport School District. - Including enrollment increases, space needs and traffic concerns - through ABC Board members

said they did not have concrete information on the exact impact on the schools.

"We pay a tremendous price for small class sizes," said ABC President Virginia Volpe. ABC predicts, however, that the project could add about 224 children to the District, contrary to reports that a 155-unit affordable housing complex will yield 85 students in the District. The School District may be forced to redistrict so the majority of the students are not forced to attend Dickinson Avenue Elementary School alone.

Housing Help Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to creating low income and affordable housing, began negotiating the purchase of the East Northport site in January 1980. Housing Help filed its first lawsuit against the Town of Huntington in 1981. In 1983, a second circuit court of appeals issued a ruling directing the Huntington Town Board to rezone the property to 14 units per acre. In June 1989 the Town Board fulfilled its obligation to the court, rezoning the property for multi-family housing. Housing Help then took title

to the property in April 1994. Just two years later in 1996, with the help of Congressman Gary Ackerman, Housing Help prepared to settle the case for 179 units, with 75 percent limited equity and 25 percent rental. Later that year, New York State agreed to fund the project for \$14 million. In March 1996, the Town Board withdrew its support of the plan and Housing Help lost its funding.

In 1998, Housing Help filed a lawsuit in federal court against the Town Board, the Planning Board and New York State contending that the Town engaged in racial discrimination when it interfered with the efforts of Housing Help to build affordable housing in East Northport. Unsatisfied with the Town's attempt to settle the lawsuit, the U.S. Department of Justice threatened to intervene in November of 1999.

The Town of Huntington and the Town Planning Board settled their side of the Housing Help lawsuit September 13, but Housing Help is still awaiting a settlement with New York State.

About 145 people attended Monday night's meeting in Northport to ask ABC board members questions about

the Town settlement and the effects of that decision. Town Councilwoman Susan Scarpatti-Reilly also attended the meeting, but she did not speak.

"Is this development going to go back to our community? Are our low-income families going to have first crack at it?" one woman asked at Monday's meeting. Ms. Volpe said there is no local preference in Housing Help's stipulation of settlement with the Town, but she hopes the State will request local preference in its settlement negotiations.

Both the Town Board and the Planning Board were named in the lawsuit, which contended that the Town was blocking Housing Help from building affordable housing on the 14.9-acre site at the corner of Pulaski and Elwood Roads, allowing for a maximum of 155 units to be built at the site - more commonly known as Matthecock Court.

The Town contends that if the Town lost the case, the court would have the opportunity to settle the matter without input from the Town Board or the community.

According to the stipulation of [Continued on page 14]

Northport Aglow With Holiday Spirit

By Rob Morrison

SENATOR FLANAGAN
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Low Income Housing Project Topic Of Special PTA Meeting

Continued from page 3) settlement, a maximum of 155 units may be built on the site - half of which must be available for full ownership. The other half, 78 units, must be affordable rental housing. According to the stipulation, anyone interested in buying housing at Mattinecock Court must be able to afford a down payment and qualify for a mortgage.

Town Councilman Mark Cuthbertson, who voted in favor of the town's settlement of the lawsuit, said he supports meetings which educate the public about the settlement and the proposal. "As long as the information is accurately portrayed here, I think these meetings are positive," Councilman Cuthbertson said. "I voted to settle on its merits because it was the right thing to do. I believed if then and I believe it now, that it was the right thing to do."

The final number of units will be decided when the land-use permitting process is completed and the Planning Board completes its environmental reviews. If it is determined that 155 units are not compatible with the property based on environmental concerns, the number may be reduced. The Mattinecock Court proposal must go through a full, have to protect our quality of life. We've been dealing with this lawsuit for 20 years. Enough is enough."

According to Ms. Volpe, a housing complex does not have to be a negative for the community. When the project is completed, a property manager will be hired to oversee the maintenance of the housing complex.

"If the State of New York were to settle this case support tomorrow, they wouldn't break ground for another two to three years," Ms. Volpe said. "If Housing Help steps over the line with some of their requests, we have the cause of action and have the right to sue."

Ms. Volpe asks that anyone who would like to join ABC or volunteer their expertise should call the ABC hotline at 261-7399. She also urges residents to contact their local public officials and ask for their support.

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comprehensive environmental Review, traffic studies, permits from the Suffolk County Department of Health, site plan review by the Town Planning Board, Town building permits and receive New York State funding before any work may begin. The environmental reviews will be conducted under the parameters of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act.

Each candidate eligible for housing at Mattinecock will have to go through employment and criminal background checks as well as be responsible for sticking to the number of occupants living at the residence that he or she lists when they apply. Violations of the rules will result in eviction.

The Town of Huntington Planning Board has the right to assert itself as the lead agency in the SEQRA review. We can make a difference. We can have an impact on how the State of New York settles its lawsuits," Ms. Volpesaid. "SEQRA is going to determine what the maximum practical density for this site will be... We have to protect our environment. We

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Dr. Kazenoff is also a Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, SUNY at Stony Brook, and formerly, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Cornell University Medical College, Full-Time Faculty, North Shore University Hospital.

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ROBERT KAZENOFF, M.D., PC

152 East Main Street, Suite F
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ROBERT KAZENOFF, M.D., PC

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The main event which pitted Omundsen by a score of 61-51. The annual charity game was started up after Tim Dunne, who was a school stringing group Multicolored Ties, sang the national anthem before the girls' alumni game, the Northport High Island Championship team against St.

SINOJC