



April 19, 2019

The Honorable Steve Banks, Commissioner
Department of Homeless Services
33 Beaver Street, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Re: Alternate Site for Homeless Facility

Dear Commissioner Banks;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Banks".

We hope this letter finds you well.

As you know, we have been pursuing talks with the Salvation Army with the hope of finding an alternate location for the homeless facility currently being considered for the Victory Boulevard site. Due to recent positive developments, we are urging you to pause your continued planning at that location and consider an extremely promising alternative.

A letter had been written to Commissioner William A. Bamford, the Salvation Army's Eastern Territorial Commander, asking him to consider giving the city of New York an opportunity to acquire a portion of the property they own at the intersection of Bay Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, the site of the former Bayley Seton Hospital.

A few days ago, an encouraging response was received. The Salvation Army met with their New York City team to review their site development options, and we were assured that they would follow up with us to discuss the possibility of using a portion of the land for a homeless shelter. Granted, this is not a "done deal," but the fact that they are proactively interested in discussing it gives us a high degree of confidence that if we truly want to get this done, we can.

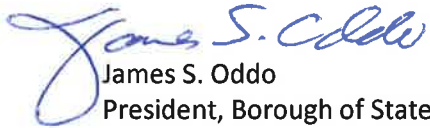
The Bay/Vanderbilt site is, we believe, a far better choice for a number of reasons. First and foremost, community opposition – which is currently virtually unanimous – would turn into community support. As well, many supportive services in Stapleton are already in place, transportation is plentiful, pedestrian and vehicular traffic is much less than Victory Boulevard, the size of the location would not be an issue, and the shelter would no longer be viewed, rightly or wrongly, as a blot on the ongoing St. George "renaissance."

We are all aware that in seeking an alternate for the Victory Boulevard site, all other city-owned properties in the area were considered and rejected for various reasons. Private locations suggested by community leaders suffered the same fate, and for many of the same reasons.

From our perspective, however, the Bayley Seton location is quite different; at the very least, it deserves a full and proper vetting. In the spirit of community harmony, and of just plain “doing the right thing,” we reiterate our request that you pause your continued planning at the Victory Boulevard location until we allow the Salvation Army to do their due diligence as they consider our suggestion.

We close with the final line of the letter from the Salvation Army, which we find to be very encouraging: “Be assured that The Salvation Army will continue to be a good neighbor as we continue our mission to serve those in need.”

Sincerely,


James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

Max Rose
Representative, 11th Congressional District, NY