1. WELCOME

The meeting is called to order 6:08 PM.

2. MAYOR KIM: DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mayor Ron Kim opened the meeting with a general discussion about the public comment period. The public comment period should not be a time for a dialog between the speakers and the Task Force since that takes away from the speakers’ time. If someone wants a dialog with Task Force members, we can provide that at a separate time.

3. MAYOR KIM: LOCATION PROCESS

The Task Force is approaching the time when it will need to recommend a location for the shelter. The Mayor’s Office will be distributing a list of potential locations to the Task Force and the public.

Mayor Kim and City Attorney Anthony Izzo discussed some requirements for remote meetings in the New York Open Meetings Law. There was some flexibility during COVID-19 but rules are less flexible now. The City is still working on obtaining proper technology to meet requirements.

With regard to the next meeting, the Task Force will be unable to meet on April 27 as planned due to conflicts. The co-chairs are planning an alternative date.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Community Member: Social Services Commissioner Tina Potter and Deputy Social Services Commissioner Pat Maxwell indicated at a past meeting of this Task Force that it is sometimes difficult to identify registered sex offenders. The shelter should not be located near a school.

Community Member: No location near a school should be considered. The speaker read a letter from another person who wanted to remain anonymous. The letter stated that violence is often a
danger at shelters. We shouldn’t rely on best case scenarios. There is a location on Route 9 that may be available. The speaker also read an online comment from another unidentified person telling of threats and violence taking place at shelters.

Community Member: The speaker is concerned about item #5 on tonight’s agenda that talks about excluding people who do not accept process at shelter. Experience with unhoused people shows that many of them have trauma. It is not appropriate to deny someone who doesn’t understand process.

Lew Benton: He handed out his comments in writing. Rules need to be clear. The proposed resolution has some discrepancies that need to be worked out. The Task Force should speak with groups of homeless people.

Oscar Schreiber: He is an attorney representing parents of Spa Catholic students. In some shelters, people don’t have to state their addresses. This can result in registered sex offenders being admitted. A problem is the accumulation of beer cans, cigarette butts, and other items thrown on the grounds by occupants of the shelter. Also, if any kid at a school is touched by a shelter occupant, there will be a lawsuit. Kids don’t need the difficulties presented by a shelter nearby.

Tim Cole: If you want to find an agency to run the shelter, do you put out a Request For Proposals to open up the process to find one or is there a different way?

Community Member: The speaker handed out comments in writing. The County is required to have a Code Blue plan. The old Napa building could be built out to facilitate the needs of the unhoused.

Patty Morrison: She is not in favor of using the former NAPA building for the shelter. She didn’t understand the comments from the attorney.

Sam Brewer: The Task Force co-chair is a pastor and a pastor has a flock. Why bring another breed of animal to our city?

7. EMAIL FROM DUANE VAUGHN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SHELTERS OF SARATOGA, ON CODE BLUE

Stephanie Romeo made a presentation to the Task Force regarding possible costs and budgets for shelters. The Task Force thanked her for her work.

5. MOTION PROPOSED BY STEPHEN TOWNE

Stephen Towne presented a motion marked “Location Exclusion” that no permanent shelter in Saratoga Springs be sited at a location near a school, playground, school bus stop, or similar locales where children meet or congregate. Children are defined as up to 18 years of age. The minimum distance from the stated locales is 1000 feet. In his opinion, there should be no mitigating factors considered when protecting children.
Motion seconded by Kate Forer.

Lindsay Connors stated that this motion cannot affect the zoning ordinances of the city.

AYES – Towne, Roohan, Halliday, Forer, Fronk
NAYS – D’Angelo, Hurley, Greiner, Connors

Motion passes 5-4

Hannah Hurley and Jules D’Angelo expressed concern over a hasty vote. Jules D’Angelo asked if the Task Force should even be voting on this motion before considering who will be allowed in the shelter. There has been some data on assaults but it is 10 years old.

Margaret Fronk stated that the motion was not about unhoused people. It was about not allowing something near a school and what’s best for community planning.

6. RESOLUTION FOR COMMITTEE’S APPROVAL

The Task Force discussed the next proposed resolution on the agenda.

Lindsey Connors presented the resolution language. The Task Force advises a year-round low barrier shelter for all adults and young adults to be welcomed “as they are,” with clear and simple behavioral expectations narrowly focused on maintaining a safe environment for all. The policies of this shelter must address the needs of the following special populations either through direct on-site services or via proactive linkages with appropriate community partners.

- those who are an imminent danger to themselves or others
- those with pets
- sex offenders
- those who are non-ambulatory or are incapable of independent toileting
- parents with children

Stephen Towne discussed the wording regarding the requirements of self-care. It differs from previous proposed language. There are some responsibilities to require that people in the shelter accept treatment and assistance to the extent that they can. A requirement should be that they not be resistant to care management services.

Margaret Fronk stated that some degree of progress should be expected from persons at the shelter. Lindsey Connors stated that requirements that people at the shelter comply with “the law” is incredibly vague.

Sherie Greiner stated that workers in a shelter are trained to calm things down and show love and respect. As to pets, a room can be set aside for owners to care for pets. Also, if a person needs additional nursing care, hospital volunteers will come in and provide that. Language about
“disabled” people should be taken out. Stephen Towne stated that he understands that a shelter can develop a way to allow pets.

Kate Forer moved to accept the motion proposed by Lindsay Connors, as revised. Kate Forer read the revised version into the record. Seconded by Margaret Fronk.

AYES: Halliday, Towne, Roohan, Forer, D’Angelo, Hurley, Connors, Greiner, Fronk
NAYS: None

Motion passes 9-0

8. LINDSEY & MAGGIE’S CONVERSATION WITH SHELTER DIRECTOR

Margaret Fronk discussed a “point-in-time” count as to how many persons are counted as homeless at a given time. The past 5 years saw a downward trend in that number and a decrease in the number of homeless in Saratoga Springs. COVID-19 obviously had an effect on those numbers (around 50 persons per night usually). Also, those years saw an upward trend in the number of people sheltered by the Department of Social Services. There has been a downward trend in the number of unsheltered people. Obviously there are some homeless and unsheltered people that we won’t know about. Code Blue shelter accepted 264 guests over this time period.

Lindsey Connors reviewed reports and interviews with the director of Joseph’s House, a 1700-plus person shelter. This shelter accepted everybody, including even sex offenders. Average stay was 30 days. She read many other statistics from the report.

Margaret Fronk stated that homelessness is a new symptom of poverty. As the costs of housing continue to rise, impoverished people are more likely to be without a place to live.

Tom Roohan read a statement from the expressing support for the Task Force’s efforts to establish a year-round shelter.

Tom Roohan shared a Saratoga North Country Continuum of Care resolution into the record. The Saratoga County North Country Continuum of Care would like to provide the following statement to the City of Saratoga Springs Mayor’s Task Force on Homelessness to consider: the Saratoga North Country Continuum of Care recognizes that year round access to all shelters is crucial to providing a pathway to permanent housing. The continuum is in support of initiatives that align with the above statement.

SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Dina Henke: None of the shelters discussed as examples are located near schools. No one on the Task Force is qualified to look at records of law enforcement calls to shelters. Many calls are made about weapons and other dangers at shelters. Shelters try to help, but there are still stabbings and other injuries. In Los Angeles they had reports that kids were scared to walk to their schools if a shelter was nearby. Los Angeles officials changed some of their decisions because of this.
Chris Mathiesen: Some of the standards discussed refer to people who are just being a threat to themselves. He thanked the Task Force for its efforts and stated that a shelter is a good thing. He supports the motion about the 1000 foot buffer. Not all persons who go to shelters are harmless. It makes sense to provide this protection to kids.

Courtney Manning: The majority of the things we do in our lives, we do to protect children. Movie ratings are an example. A shelter near a school would provide a bad experience for kids.

Community Member: She is a social worker. Her child is a student at Spa Catholic. She has seen kids scared by police cars when they respond to calls near schools. A shelter shouldn’t be near kids. She appreciates passing the motion to keep it 1000 feet away.

Jules D’Angelo noted that if the Task Force is going to vote on motions, there should be more time to discuss them. Hannah Hurley asked that information for votes be given further in advance. Sherie Greiner stated that she doesn’t want the shelter near children. She voted against the location motion only because she didn’t like the verbiage about homeless people.

10. ADJOURN

Tom Roohan moved to adjourn. Ayes all.

Meeting adjourned 8:05 P.M.
Proposed Motion – Location Exclusion

Introduction:

As we begin our discussion re a shelter location, I wanted to first put forth a motion to help establish a “ground rule” that can streamline our deliberation and attempt to make our examination of options more efficient.

Businesses, insurance companies, law firms and real estate companies alike, and many other entities, all utilize the term “exclusion” to eliminate certain items or matters from consideration. In our case, too, it is applicable to our location options as well.

Our country is currently reeling from uncontrolled violence and unexplained behavior due to many reasons some of which are considered existent within the homeless population. Moreover, much of this activity is being conducted at schools or on schoolgrounds. With this background, we cannot take a chance by considering, let alone recommending, a location that exposes the safety and security of the most vulnerable within our community – namely our children. We must protect them as the priority.

As a result, I would like to put forth the following Motion.

Motion:

That no permanent shelter in Saratoga Springs be sited at a location near a School, Playground, School Bus Stop or similar locales where children meet or congregate.

Children as defined by this Motion:

For purposes of this motion, children are defined as any individual up to the age of 18, the base legal age of an Adult.

Minimum Required Location “Buffer” for a Permanent Shelter:

The minimum required distance, or “buffer,” from a School, Playground, School Bus Stop or similar locales where children meet or congregate in which a permanent shelter could be considered or sited is 1,000 feet. This is the same legal requirement that restrains pedophiles from residing or frequenting these locations.

Rational behind this Proposal:

In deliberating matters of disagreement, it is not uncommon to utilize “mitigating considerations” to bring the differing parties together. Please note that, in my opinion, there are no mitigating actions that can adequately make up for compromises in the safety and security of our children. To me, it is a black and white issue.

Thus, the basis behind this Motion.

4/20 Passed 5-0-4
As you know I have spoken several times during task force meetings and city council meetings. My main most pressing concern has never been mentioned as sex offenders. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse starting as early as 5 years old, I feel compelled to address my concerns now.

I'm going to talk about conversations between Task Force members in regard to the presentation by Tina Potter, longtime commissioner of Saratoga County Department of Social Services who was accompanied by her deputy commissioner, Patrick Maxwell, during the Task Force Meeting 3/30/23 that are relevant to tonight's agenda.

Task Force members and Ms. Potter stated that individuals do not give names, full names or can tell you they are anybody. When that is stated by experts in this meeting who deal with this all the time and have for many, many years, they know this is a fact.

So when the Low Barrier definition states no sex offenders, the facts of the reality of lack of identity disclosure in dealing with the unhoused makes it impossible to safely exclude sex offenders. Therefore locating any shelter zero feet from a school with children as young as 10 years old or near any school is unacceptable. Requiring IDs and background checks is the only way an agency can show that they have done their best to identify sex offenders to the safest extent possible.

I'm going to read to you exactly what was said which should make every member of this task force agree that a shelter should not be located zero feet from a school. That it should not be located at 5 Williams Street.

10:02 Kate Forer.- With Code Blue requirements do you know people's names and keep track of that data?

10:07 Tina Potter- Um, no

10:09 Kate Forer.- Okay

10:10- Tina Potter- We try and we do track it, but an individual could come into Code Blue and say, I'm Kate and they may be or they could come in and say I'm anybody. And you know we may take names they may take names just so we have a count on duplicate individuals, but they really don't have to do the things that an individual has to do to comply with temporary assistance.

10:32 Kate Forer- Gotcha- very different. Okay

12:25- Maggie Fronk- Commissioner, as we talk to the other low demand shelters in many counties around they have kind of special agreements with their departments of social services and sometimes when we are working to get somebody who has been unhoused particularly if they have been unhoused for a long time. They are not able to immediately comply, um, and it's kind of that ___?____ moment getting the housing first. Getting them into housing and building a trust relationship, um, and at first (12:47) they may not be willing to do something like give their full name (12:48-12:50) or kind of go for job searches they need to.

15:17 Tina Potter- We don't have housing first
Good evening. I’m Lew Benton. I reside at 70 Railroad Place.

I apologize to the Task Force for exceeding the Public Comment time limit at your March 30 meeting. I hope that each of you reviewed the written comments I distributed at that time. I incorporate them here by reference because they are central to your task and, to my knowledge, have yet to be addressed.

The resolution on tonight’s agenda lacks the level of detail necessary to inform the community of the rationale for its recommendation and seems to beg several questions.

- The resolution advises that the community needs a year-round, full time low barrier adult shelter but then lists six ‘exceptions’, some of which are at variance with a true “low-barrier” facility.
- The last, ‘...failure to comply with the law’ is so amorphous as to be meaningless.
- The penultimate criterium would seemingly, itself, take the shelter out of the low-barrier classification.

The resolution references no data or study supporting its recommendation. For example, the March 16, 2023, CARES report which includes street unsheltered. It is these homeless that CARES suggests “…would benefit from a year-round low barrier shelter.” It also includes the gender, age, race, ethnicity and the share of the enumerated street homeless that identify as mental health, alcohol or drug use ‘disordered.’

So I encourage you to resolve these apparent discrepancies before adopting the resolution.

Nor does the resolution make reference to the physical size, capacity and necessary amenities of the shelter. It does not detail the next steps required to move from concept to a final plan acceptable to regulatory agencies and the community. Until the outside shelter parameters (size, capacity, staff needs, etc.) are determined, any site recommended will be suspect.

It has become my custom on my daily walk to spend some with the homeless who camp in the Woodlawn Avenue garage and in Congress Park. If this is the population we seek to serve the city must not advance a shelter that shuts them out.

Thank you for your attention. April 20, 2023
The Saratoga Springs Mayor’s Task Force on Homelessness advises that Saratoga Springs needs a year-round, low-barrier shelter for all adults and young adults to be welcomed ‘as they are’, with clear and simple behavioral expectations narrowly focused on maintaining a safe environment for all. Policies of this shelter must address the needs of the following special populations either through direct on-site services or via pro-active linkages with appropriate community partners:

- Those who are an imminent danger to themselves or others
- Those with pets
- Sex offenders
- Those who are non-ambulatory or are incapable of independent toileting
- Parents with children
April 20th, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

The Saratoga-North Country Continuum of Care would like to provide the following statement for the City of Saratoga Springs Mayor’s Homelessness Task Force to consider:

The Saratoga-North Country Continuum of Care recognizes that year-round access to shelters of all levels is crucial to providing a pathway to permanent housing.

The Continuum of Care is in support of initiatives that align with the spirit of the above statement.

Sincerely,

Andy Gilpin, Board Co-Chair
3 ALETTA ST - INDUSTRIAL FOR RENT - PROPOSED SHELTER LOCATION

https://www.showcase.com/3-aletta-st-saratoga-springs-ny-12866/23937862/

SUMMARY / HIGHLIGHTS

1. Location! Ideal business / industrial zoned location with close proximity to Market 32 Plaza and CDTA bus route. Walking distance to many RISE and SoS services.
2. Close proximity to the previous SoS Code Blue Shelter on Adelphi St.
4. Well known as the former Saratoga NAPA building.
5. Large open space (9,750 sq. ft) that can be quickly built-out in phases to accommodate immediate and future expansion needs.
6. Immediate availability, property has been vacant for many years.
7. Large parking lot, warehouse storage, and even a loading dock.
8. Property is owned by the Aronson family. The Aronson’s also own the Algonguin Building and other real estate in Downtown Saratoga Springs. Jeff and Shari Aronson are well known philanthropists who run the Aronson Family Foundation and have generously donated millions of dollars to worthy causes. In 2015 they donated $10 million to create an international studies center at John Hopkins University called the Aronson Center. This unique opportunity to help the Saratoga community with a solution for our homelessness situation appears to be a good fit for their foundation.
9. For more information, please contact Meghan O’Connor from Keller Williams at 315-378-7710.

Meghan O’Connor Keller Williams Capital District Real Estate
315-378-7710