

Bethesda



TOWARD A THIRD CENTURY

SARATOGA



SPRINGS

March 29, 2018

Ms. Marcy Dreimiller, Chair, and the Board
Shelters of Saratoga
14 Walworth St.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
info@sheltersofsaratoga.org

Dear Ms. Dreimiller and friends,

Bethesda Episcopal Church is committed to continue and expand our mission in Saratoga Springs, especially to serve those in need. To that end, we are committed to utilizing the new building we are developing on Washington Street to be a critical resource in service to the community. As you know, our informal, preliminary discussions have demonstrated Bethesda's interest in exploring the prospect to provide a safe, permanent location for the Code Blue program. Shelters of Saratoga has done truly heroic work in serving homeless individuals and families left behind in Saratoga Springs's otherwise booming economy. We propose that our organizations promptly sit down and explore the feasibility of meeting this need in the most expeditious and economically efficient way possible.

Bethesda's desire to serve the community stems from our Scriptural tradition stretching back millennia, the very Judeo-Christian values we continue to uphold in the 21st Century. In this spirit, we hope you will see our proposal as an opportunity to unite the Saratoga Springs community and bring it together on behalf of those most in need. Our community is blessed with economic prosperity and all that comes with it: full employment, rising property values, a diverse and dynamic tax base to support municipal services. But, as we all know, many less fortunate individuals have been left behind. It is a deficit in our community's image, highlighted by the tragic death of Nancy Pitts, that among all the evident economic prosperity, we have failed to settle on a permanent site for emergency shelter for vulnerable, homeless individuals.

Our hope is that Bethesda's Community Center, in keeping with our core mission, can provide a permanent, central downtown location for Code Blue that meets with both general community acceptance, and the requirements of local, State and Federal law. In addition, Bethesda's Community Center can provide programs and enhancements not available at the proposed Walworth Street site.

If Shelters were to make a concerted attempt to work with Bethesda, details would need to be addressed, such as: lease terms, facility access and security, how other facility occupants and parish activities can be accommodated without disruption, etc. We hope that solving these issues remains in the category of "management" problems that can be addressed transparently and in good faith.

Finally, as you proceed through the local approval process, including any litigation that may ensue, we respectfully ask that you consider the following facts about Bethesda's proposal.

Status of Development

Bethesda' Parish House and Community Center is planned to comprise nearly 20,000 square feet, including a full catering kitchen, dining hall, parish offices and space that we have planned to provide to organizations such as yours that are compatible with Bethesda's mission. We require a final round of capital fundraising prior to executing a mortgage and breaking ground.

Safety and Security

Bethesda's facility is designed to afford all concerned an operating environment that emphasizes safety and security. Participants in programs at our facility will be able to arrive at our building and courtyard without queueing on the sidewalk, and enter a facility that will have both human and technical means of providing security and privacy at all times. These elements will be expressly provided in any lease or operating agreement.

Permanency

We understand and appreciate that you are seeking a "permanent" home for Code Blue, to eliminate the need to use borrowed space. Bethesda is not going anywhere; we have been at our present location since 1842, and our planning horizon extends indefinitely. We are willing to discuss terms that would bring the sense of permanence that you are seeking on Walworth Street.

Regulatory Compliance

Our plan has received both site plan approval and a special use permit from the Planning Board in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. A program such as Code Blue is clearly permitted at our address under the city's Zoning Code. In addition, the proposed overnight accommodation would be within our rights under the Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (42 USC Section 2000cc).

More Space

We can offer you at least as much square footage as you are presently planning on Walworth Street, allowing for more beds for emergency sheltering, and plenty of room for overflow on site. Our 3rd and 4th floor plans total more than 10,000 square feet. There would be ample space for men's and women's sleeping rooms, showers and bathrooms, laundry, kitchenette and Code Blue staff. The common kitchen and dining hall on the first floor would also be available on a scheduled basis as needed.

Cost

Your mission enjoys widespread and generous support from the community. Bethesda would anticipate that the capital and other support available to Shelters for this program would be

applied to the Bethesda location, so that it would be economically neutral compared to your Walworth Street proposal. Details, of course, would be subject to a transparent discussion of our mutual needs and objectives.

Timeliness

Our plans call for groundbreaking this year, with Bonacio Construction as construction manager. If we can meet this timetable, we will be open for emergency shelter by winter 2019-20. This gives you a certainty that you should consider as you look ahead.

All-Day Drop-in

With sufficient programming and management, the Bethesda location could be available to individuals in need at times other than when emergency shelter is required. Expanded access could allow for daytime drop-in, laundry and personal hygiene, meals, and access to other services and programs, including social services, job training and others.

Added Programs

We have had preliminary conversations with Saratoga County about making Bethesda the location for a Department of Social Services satellite office. We also have a more than 75-year relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous and anticipate that AA's peer-focused approach would be of value to many of the individuals served by Shelters and Code Blue. A major community supporter of our proposal has expressed interest in establishing a job-readiness program at Bethesda.

Convenient Destination

Other amenities in the complex would provide individuals in need with a safe place to be that is off the street, yet not a great distance from Broadway. Our community has been challenged in recent years to meet the legitimate desires of merchants, visitors and property owners, as well as the rights of individuals to be in public rights of way. Bethesda's proposed courtyard would allow entry to the complex without queueing on the public sidewalk. Bethesda is in a commercial zone, not near an elementary school or single family residences.

A Welcoming, Dignified Environment

Our parish is a welcoming, inclusive and caring community. We are confident that members of the parish would become volunteers and financial supporters of your program. In addition to your own space, your program would have scheduled access to the catering kitchen and dining hall. Our new building's design offers dignity and grace for all who enter, as it complements the church's neo-gothic style and historic aspect.

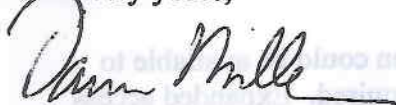
Community Support

Since our recent meetings with Shelters beginning in November, we have discussed these ideas with community, philanthropic and political leaders, and we have been encouraged by the favorable responses. We strongly believe that whatever additional support is needed to create a permanent location for Code Blue would be forthcoming if your Board and our Vestry were to agree to terms.

Bethesda's clergy, wardens, Vestry and parishioners have the greatest admiration and respect for the work you have done for the neediest among us here in Saratoga Springs. In fulfillment of God's plan for Bethesda, we offer our resources in partnership with yours to provide permanent, safe emergency shelter, recovery support, and human services to all those among us in need, at a location that can unite the community in support.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,



Darren Miller
Senior Warden



The Very Reverend Marshall J. Vang
Interim Rector

cc: Mayor Meg Kelly
City Council
Clergy and community leaders