

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 1, 2018

TO: CHAIRWOMAN MARY LYMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: DOCKET ITEM #6 - SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2018-0017 –
421 CLIFFORD AVENUE

This memorandum provides report revisions pertaining to the review of SUP #2018-0017 which is a request to operate a social service use at 421 Clifford Avenue. The applicant proposes to distribute primarily food and clothing to those in need at off-site locations, host one-on-one counseling and tutoring appointments with clients, in addition to providing on-site volunteer training. Staff proposed revisions to SUP #2018-0017 relate to the:

- Site Description on page 2;
- Proposal on page 4 and 5;
- Staff Analysis on page 7; and
- Recommended Condition 2 on page 9 and Condition 14 on page 10.

I. Staff Report Revisions:

A. Site Description:

Staff proposes to amend the first sentence in the second paragraph of the SUP Site Description on page 3 to correctly identify the tenant to the west of the subject building. The sentence should read:

“The subject property is adjacent to other commercial uses, including Boyles Motor Sales and R. Bratti Enterprises to the north, Verizon Wireless to the east, an anticipated daycare to the south, and a ~~vacant commercial~~ vitamin wholesale business, Plaza Izalco, to the west.”

B. Proposal

Staff proposes revisions to the Proposal section on pages 4 and 5 to correctly represent aspects of the applicant’s final proposal.

1. The second to the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 4 should read:

“The applicant also would provide ~~on-site distribution of clothing~~ appointments to eight clients a week on Saturday.”

2. Under the Volunteer Orientation and Training section on page 4, the second to last sentence should read:

~~“Once~~ Twice a month, on Saturday afternoon, the applicant would host a youth volunteering event for 10 youths.”

3. On-site Mass should be proposed as occurring on the First Friday of every month and not the first Saturday. Staff proposes adding a “First Friday of the Month” to the schedule on page 5 and removing the activity under the First Saturday of the Month Schedule as noted:

First Friday of the Month

On-site mass limited to a maximum of 20 people, all of whom are indicated to be volunteers. (20 volunteers)

First Saturday of the Month Schedule

~~2. On-site mass limited to a maximum of 20 people, all of whom are indicated to be volunteers. (20 volunteers)~~

C. Staff Analysis

Staff proposes to amend the last three sentences in the first paragraph on page 7 of the Staff Analysis to add clarity to one element of the applicant’s proposal that the staff does not support.

~~Although the applicant also proposed on-site distribution on Saturdays by appointment, staff has not included this service in Condition #2 and recommends that the operation is limited to off-site distribution. The traffic generated from the appointments in addition to the volunteer coordination efforts and volunteer training would overwhelm the relatively small building and neighborhood area. Last, staff believes it is unlikely that the applicant could reasonably limit the flow of people in need of clothing to appointments.~~

“Although the applicant proposes counseling and tutoring appointments from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month for a maximum of eight clients, staff does not support the inclusion of these appointments as part of the operation. The addition of appointments to the volunteer training and coordination of materials activities would overwhelm the relatively small building and site, potentially resulting in parking and traffic impacts. Condition #2, which outlines the staff recommendation of SUP approved operations at the site, does not include the Saturday appointments.”

D. Recommended Conditions

Staff proposes a typographical correction to Condition #2, and the addition of specific language to Condition #14 to ensure all loading and unloading activities occur on the property.

2. **CONDITION AMENDED BY PLANNING COMMISSION:** The applicant shall operate consistent with the description below. Any intensification of the use, including an increase of homeless services, will require City Council approval of an amendment to the SUP. ~~(P&Z)~~ (PC)
 - a. The operating hours shall be between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday.
 - b. Religious services are permitted as an accessory use to the operation.
 - ~~c.~~
 - ~~d.~~ c. On-site storage of materials for the off-site distribution only is permitted. No on-site distribution of materials, such as clothing and food, shall be permitted.
 - ~~e.~~ d. Administrative office activities are permitted.
 - ~~f.~~ e. On-site appointments are permitted for counseling, tutoring or assistance with social service applications three days a week from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. for a maximum of two clients per day.
 - ~~g.~~ f. Volunteer training is permitted.
 - ~~h.~~ g. Youth volunteer events are permitted Saturday between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m., only.
 - ~~i.~~ h. Cooking is not permitted on-site.
 - ~~j.~~ i. A maximum of 17 volunteers is permitted on-site at any one time.
14. **CONDITION AMENDED BY PLANNING COMMISSION:** Supply deliveries, loading, and unloading activities shall occur between the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and must occur entirely on-site, by a passenger vehicle and or 12-foot box truck, and met by staff or a volunteer. Deliveries, loading, and unloading shall not occur from Clifford Avenue. ~~(P&Z)~~ (T&ES) (PC)

Staff continues to recommend approval of this SUP proposal subject to the report revisions in the Site Description and Staff Analysis sections, to the amendments to Conditions 2 and 14, and to all conditions contained in the report.

DEL RAY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

www.delraycitizens.org

P.O. Box 2233, Alexandria, VA 22301

May 31, 2018
Karl W. Moritz, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning
City Hall, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: SUP # 2018-0017

421 E Clifford Ave

The Del Ray Citizens Association conditionally supports the Special Use Permit application for a social service use.

On May 9, 2018, the Del Ray Citizens Association (DRCA) voted to support SUP application #2018-0017 with the following conditions:

1. The SUP requires that trash be kept in a closed container;
2. Trash is collected weekly; and
3. Planning staff will conduct a review of the SUP six months and one year after the Mother of Light Center's social service operation commences.

The DRCA further recommends that the applicants stripe the parking lot, if possible, and that they identify a point of contact within the Mother of Light Center organization who can be a liaison to the community. The DRCA envisions that this person's contact information would be widely shared so that the neighbors know how to reach someone if there is a problem or question. The DRCA also suggests that, if possible, the applicants identify a point of contact within the community who can represent the neighbors and build a relationship with the Mother of Light Center representative.

The DRCA's Land Use Committee (LUC) held two open, public meetings regarding the SUP application, both of which the applicants attended. After the first meeting, in April, demonstrated that the original application was highly contentious, the applicants overhauled the business plan. The revised application, discussed at the LUC's May meeting, proved far less controversial, though several neighbors were and remain strongly opposed because of concerns about parking, safety, and a lack of outreach on the applicants' part. The DRCA hears these concerns and proposes the above recommendations and condition for a six-month review to help to address them. Further, the DRCA believes that the applicants' willingness to completely revise their application in response to neighborhood concerns shows good faith, and that the Mother of Light Center as proposed in the revised application would be an asset to this community.

Sincerely,

Annie Ebbers
Kristine Hesse
DRCA LUC Co-Chairs

Rod Kuckro, DRCA President

Cc: Madeleine Sims, Staff Reviewer
Beth Carrier, Applicant

SUP2018-0017
Additional Materials

Special Use Permit #2018-0017

Adam Bibler <adam.bibler@gmail.com>

Mon 6/4/2018 4:05 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Dear Planning Commission:

I am writing in support of the application for Special Use Permit #2018-0017 at 421 Clifford Avenue. I live approximately two blocks away from the site on Hume Ave. I believe it is a worthy service endeavor that should be supported by the city.

Thank you and I am happy to discuss further.

Best regards,
Adam Bibler

SUP 2018-0017

SUP2018-0017
Additional Materials

Nat Wilson <natwilson@gmail.com>

Mon 6/4/2018 4:07 PM

To: PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>;

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I'm writing regarding SUP application 2018-0017 at 421 Clifford Ave. As a resident of Clifford Ave and as a parent who will be enrolling my daughter at the daycare at an adjoining property, I oppose the application for the following reasons:

- The site is too small to contain the proposed intensity of use and the existing printing business.
- The proposed use doesn't conform to the 2016 Master Plan amendment for residential use.
- The proposed use will prevent redevelopment of the site, as well as discourage investment in the area.
- The applicant notes that the gate will be used to prevent loitering on the property. The gate has an approximate one-foot setback so loitering will occur on the public right of way and adversely affect neighboring properties.
- The property owner has shown a disregard for city ordinances and has accumulated several zoning violations. Given the public statements from the applicant that no one will be turned away I expect there will be scope creep.

Given the property owner's past disregard for city ordinances, I believe there are no SUP conditions that could be applied to mediate the adverse effects of the proposed use. I urge the commission to reject SUP 2018-0017.

Thank you,
Nat Wilson

To: Madeleine Sims
Subject: RE: SUP application for 421 Clifford Avenue

From: Madeleine Sims
Sent: Tuesday, May 29, 2018 5:26 PM
To: Adrienne Miller
Cc: Mary Christesen; Ann Horowitz
Subject: Re: SUP application for 421 Clifford Avenue

Adrienne,

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. the corrections will be made to the report.

Kind regards,

Madeleine

Madeleine Sims | Urban Planner
City of Alexandria, Virginia
Planning & Zoning / Land Use Services
301 King Street Room 2100 Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.3802, direct
www.alexandriava.gov

From: Adrienne Miller
Sent: Tuesday, May 29, 2018 5:16:45 PM
To: Madeleine Sims
Cc: Mary Christesen; Ann Horowitz
Subject: Re: SUP application for 421 Clifford Avenue

Thanks so much, Madeleine.

By the way, I was surprised when your report said that the building to the west of 421 Clifford Avenue is vacant - that's 417/419, where Plaza Izalco is and they've been difficult neighbors to say the least. I spoke to you on the phone about them and sent you an email as well (along with Anne Isaacs). They're routinely in violation of their SUP by having 18-wheelers making all of their deliveries, keeping their lot filled with debris, and creating a significant amount of noise while unloading. In addition, the owner was arrested for chasing and assaulting one of his employees with a machete, he has verbally attacked me numerous times, and a Federal search warrant was served there in reference to criminal activity they're engaged in. So "vacant" certainly doesn't accurately reflect the negative impact they've had on the neighborhood. I've provided this information to the City several times, and other than being fined for unloading in the street (which, of course, is a violation of City Code), nothing has been done to address these issues.

I'd appreciate it if this email is either included in the package being sent to the Planning Committee and City Council or forwarded to them separately.

Again, thanks for your help with this process!

Adrienne

On May 29, 2018, at 10:53 AM, Madeleine Sims <Madeleine.Sims@alexandriava.gov> wrote:

Adrienne,

Thank you for writing us your concerns. Your email will be sent to the Planning Commission and City Council for inclusion with the application materials and staff report. The staff report and final application can be accessed at this link (Docket Item

#7): http://legistar.granicus.com/alexandria/meetings/2018/6/1883_A_Planning_Commission_18-06-05_Docket.pdf

Planning Commission meets on June 5, 2018 at 7 p.m., in Council Chambers (2nd floor of City Hall, 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314). The Planning Commission recommendation would then be sent to City Council. City Council will meet on June 23, 2018 at 9:30 a.m., in Council Chambers. If you other questions, or additional concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Madeleine

Madeleine Sims | Urban Planner
City of Alexandria, Virginia
Planning & Zoning / Land Use Services
301 King Street Room 2100 Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.3802, direct
www.alexandriava.gov

From: Adrienne Miller
Sent: Monday, May 28, 2018 9:54:47 PM
To: Mary Christesen; Madeleine Sims
Subject: SUP application for 421 Clifford Avenue

Dear Mary and Madeleine,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the approval of a special use permit for the Mother of Light Center at 421 Clifford Avenue. I have spoken to you both on the phone, of course, but wanted to convey my concerns in writing as well.

The MOLC has asked me why I am opposed to helping the homeless/disadvantaged - the assumption they're making by asking this question is unfortunate and couldn't be further from the truth. I'm a strong supporter of helping the homeless/disadvantaged and have been doing so for the past 25 years as an Alexandria police officer. I learned the importance of this from my mother, Joann Miller, who spent a significant portion of her life helping citizens of Alexandria. That being said, after 25 years of working with the homeless/disadvantaged, I am fully aware of the problems and risks involved with this endeavor. Unfortunately, a large percentage of them suffer from significant mental health issues, are addicted to drugs/alcohol, engage in/display

inappropriate behaviors, or have criminal histories. As a result, facilities assisting them, and the neighborhoods in which they're located, experience problems such as loitering, excessive noise, disorderly conduct, fights, urinating in public - and even more concerning, an increase in criminal activities such as assaults, larcenies, destruction of property, drug activity, and prostitution.

When I moved to my house at 413 Clifford Avenue 17 years ago, it wasn't the neighborhood it is today. I had prostitutes and their customers parking in front of my house, intoxicated people passing out, throwing up, and urinating in my yard, and I routinely found used crack pipes and syringes in the street. Some of the people I confronted in front of my house were even wanted by the police. After enough people were confronted or arrested, and with the effort of the community, the problems eventually dissipated. This is a nice, safe community now, as is evidenced by the increasing number of families with young children seeking to move here and the establishment of family-friendly businesses, such as the daycare center directly behind me on Hume Avenue. It's extremely upsetting to think that these problems might return this community now, and to a greater degree. This is a quality of life and safety issue for the residents of this community, particularly those closest to 421 Clifford Avenue (several of which are within just 100-300 feet).

I have a significant problem with the reason the MOLC chose this location. Del Ray does not have a homeless problem; this is my from personal experience, as well as that of Off. Bennie Evans, who works very closely with Alexandria's homeless. The MOLC has admitted that they chose this location simply because it was available and had the cheapest rent they could find. So their choice wasn't based on serving the needs of the community at all, and in fact, they'll be doing quite the opposite. They'll be bringing the homeless/disadvantaged and the problems noted above into a community where they don't currently exist. I don't think it's reasonable to expect the residents of this community to have their quality of life, safety, and property values jeopardized so that the MOLC can save a few dollars in rent every month. There are certainly other locations that are more conducive to the MOLC's mission and aren't in such close proximity to homes. The MOLC is determined to use this location though because they already signed a lease and have been paying rent since last November. This was extremely presumptuous and premature on their part and this community should not have to pay the price for that.

I have other concerns as well, a few of which I'll outline.

- Inexperience of the MOLC: The MOLC is a new organization. While they've observed the operations of similar organizations, they've never done this type of work themselves. Their staff will be comprised of volunteers, who have little to no training on how to effectively and safely work with people suffering from mental illness or drug/alcohol addiction. In addition, their plan has been very vague, contradictory, and fluid, and frankly, they seem to be winging it. There's too much at stake for this community, as well as MOLC volunteers and clients, for the MOLC to wing it.

- Continually changing plans and contradictory statements of the MOLC: The MOLC has presented three different proposals now, addressing among other things, their hours of operation, the activities that will occur at the Center, the types of services they'll be providing to clients, as well as to whom, how many,

where and how often these services will be provided. Many of the statements the MOLC has made to me and several of my neighbors have contradicted what they've stated on their application. This could be because they're inexperienced and winging it, as I mentioned above, but I've learned through experience that some applicants say what they feel they need to on an application in order to get approved and once approved, operate their business as they please. I'm very concerned that this is the case with the MOLC. I been reassured by the City, and I know from personal experience, that if you bring an SUP violation to the City's attention, it will be addressed with a warning, citation, or fine; however, this is a long process, which all too often does not result in any significant change, let alone the closure of the business. Meanwhile, the community is left to deal with the business and its violations.

- Parking & increased traffic: There are 8 parking spaces at 421 Clifford Avenue, which are not nearly enough to accommodate the current printing business, which will be staying there, and the delivery vehicles and up to 20 people that will be at the MOLC. There are very few spaces on the street and they're usually taken by employees of the nearby businesses. In addition, Plaza Izalco at 417/419 Clifford Avenue has 18-wheelers making all of their deliveries (in violation of their SUP) nearly every day, sometimes twice a day, blocking the street in the process.

I understand that this is a difficult decision, but I hope that the MOLC's reason for choosing this particular location won't be given more consideration than the well-being of this community.

Many thanks for hearing me out and for the assistance you've given me.

Best wishes,

Adrienne

P.S. I would greatly appreciate it if you would include this letter in the package forwarded to the Planning Commission and City Council.

2920 Jeff Davis Highway, LLC
7215 Poplar Street
Annandale, Virginia 22003

May 30th, 2018

Madeleine Sims, Urban Planner
City of Alexandria, Virginia
Planning & Zoning / Land Use Services
301 King Street, Room 2100, Alexandria, VA 22314
Delivered via email: Madeleine.Sims@AlexandriaVA.Gov

Ms. Sims,

With regards to the Special Use Permit (SUP) Application for the property located at 421 Clifford Avenue via the applicant, Mother of Light Center (MOLC), we wish to express our strong concern and explicit objection to this proposed use. Given the limited parking at 421 Clifford Avenue of 8 parking spaces and the number of projected participants (MOLC volunteers/clients) there simply isn't enough parking to support this organization's proposed use. To further compound the parking deficiency issue, the building owner, Mr. Asfar Aziz, has stated within the SUP application that he plans to continue to operate his printing business on the property, albeit on a part-time basis, it still further creates additional demands on a 1200 Square Foot building with a mere 8 parking spaces. Where will Mr. Aziz park his car? When applicable, where will his employees, vendors, suppliers and customers park their cars when visiting his business? Unless overlooked mistakenly, we see no mention within the SUP of parking demands and plans for AZ Printing? Should this not be taken into consideration?

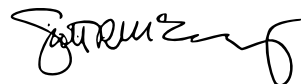
Secondly, contemplation should be carefully taken as to the profile of the immediate surrounding neighbors, most of which are either residential or retail establishments and both with 7 day/week parking demands. Case in point, both our tenants at 2920 Jefferson Davis Highway, Cellular Sales and Bingo Tire, are open Saturday and Sunday, from approximately 9am-5pm. Residents of the surrounding single family homes will be home on Saturday and Sunday, therefore claiming some of the street parking MOLC plans to utilize. We can't speak for other owners of surrounding retail property, but I can state firmly that given our very limited parking at 2920 Jeff Davis Highway, we cannot at any day or time offer assistance to MOLC for their inadequate parking needs.

Lastly, as much as we admire MOLC's mission to improve the lives of those less fortunate, it can't be overlooked that extending a helping hand to the needy, disadvantaged and homeless does come with a degree of loitering in and around any given property with this sort of charitable outpouring. Per the SUP application, MOLC's solution to prevent loitering is to utilize a "locking gate." While this certainly discourages after hours loitering on 421 Clifford Avenue, it does nothing to prevent or discourage loitering around neighboring properties.

Again, I stress that we admire and support MOLC's mission and efforts, but not as an occupant at 421 Clifford Avenue

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Best Regards,



Scott McElhaney, Managing Member
2920 Jeff Davis Highway, LLC
703-862-3365
Scott@arlingtonproperty.net

CC: Kristen.Walentisch@AlexandriaVA.Gov , Ann.Horowitz@AlexandriaVA.Gov

To: Madeleine Sims
Subject: RE: 421 Clifford Ave SUP - feedback from Shawn & Holly Busby Inbox x

From: Shawn Busby <shawnbusby007@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 27, 2018 11:45 AM
To: Madeleine Sims
Subject: 421 Clifford Ave SUP - feedback from Shawn & Holly Busby Inbox x

Hi Madeleine Sims,
Holly Busby and Shawn Busby do not support the special use permit (for 421 Clifford Ave) for the following reasons:

Shawn's perspective: I don't see anything in the application that identifies MOLC will be working jointly with county, state, or local resources to help address the needs of the homeless (including health services for mentally ill and substance abuse). Trained volunteers are simply volunteers - they are not trained professionals with proper education or licensing to provide intensive intervention services that are required to make an actual difference / positive outcome. Personally speaking I am concerned with many other items such as: safety, security, litter, crime, drugs, pan handling, loitering, etc. I assume the respite day center will naturally pull homeless into the neighborhood for the services they offer. I see nothing in the special use permit that acknowledges this and articulates what MOLC (or city, state, or local government) will be doing to mitigate the impacts that could have upon the citizens of Del Ray.

Holly's perspective

I have worked in the human services and criminal justice field for over 26 years and am keenly aware of the unique needs and challenges the homeless population brings. There is no question that there is a great need for community resources and intervention in the areas of chemical dependency, mental health and medical interventions as those factors are most commonly and frequently a huge contributor in their homelessness. However there is a growing body of research that indicates expert, evidence based interventions are the only types of intervention that have demonstrated real results to include a reduction in recidivism, relapse, and an increase in housing stabilization.

I work for a federal agency who provides specialized crisis intervention training to law enforcement and other criminal justice and community based professionals who interact and intervene with this population. This specialized training increases the chance for positive intervention and outcomes for those folks suffering from mental illness and substance abuse issues. Although I can appreciate the desire of good people to offer assistance it is critical for the best interest of the people they are trying to help as well as the community as a whole that the intervention and assistance is based on sound research and provided by highly trained people. It does not appear in this application that this is the case.

As a woman who lives close to the proposed location I can honestly tell you granting this special permit will place me and others in our neighborhood at risk of harm. My current worksite in DC is across the street from a similar shelter for the homeless. Everyday there are long lines of people waiting to get served, lining up hours before the site opens. Although this applications indicates it would serve only 33 people, there is absolutely no way for anyone to limit the number of people who will show up or when they will show up or where they will

go once turned away. On a daily basis I am witness to drug dealing, drug use, loitering and panhandling. I don't want this to be my experience on the street where I live and until now have felt safe.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. It is my hope you will deny this special use permit request. Your decision will impact not only those of us who call Del Rey home but those who need the help of well informed, highly trained professionals, something that is glaringly not evident in the proposed plan.

403A Clifford Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22305

City of Alexandria
Department of Planning and Zoning
301 King Street
Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

May 28, 2018

Dear Madame or Sir:

I am writing to express my strenuous objections to the placement of what purports to be a social service organization at the top of my street. I have a Master in Social Work, and I spent ten years working as a social worker in multiple communities, and it is through this experience that I call into question 1) the need for this outpost on my street, or even in Del Ray 2) the level of preparedness of this group to successfully run an organization and 3) this group's care and concern for my neighborhood.

There is Zero Need for This Outpost on My Street

This group has not articulated the need for the "services" they purport to deliver. Why is it that they can't simply pool their resources and support existing organizations that serve the homeless? Why is a new organization necessary? How is this effort in any way an efficient way to get help to those who need it? I don't see ANY evidence in their SUP. In their SUP they talk about meeting homeless people where they are in communities then referring them to this outpost on Clifford for service. An Alexandria Police Officer who attended the first Land Use Committee meeting in which this group was discussed went on the record as saying there are no homeless people in Del Ray. I fail to see how it is a good idea to attract them to this neighborhood, my block in particular, which includes several vulnerable senior citizens, at least one toddler, several single women, and a few children. Isn't it putting a burden on them to require them to travel here to get the help they desperately need? If they are meeting the homeless where they are, why can't they serve them there? Why is it necessary to introduce them to my neighborhood, possibly exposing my neighbors and I to the dangers that we all know come with the presence of the indigent? Part of why I chose to purchase property in this area is the confidence I have in my personal safety here. This proposal completely obliterates that sense of security that I have. If, for some reason they are not able to serve them where they are, then why can't they simply offer services to them in their churches? Why does it have to be on my block? I'm not seeing the logic here. I call this an "outpost", because what they propose really is an outpost of the Catholic church, not a true social service organization. I have always found it to be distasteful to see religious organizations of any denomination proselytizing to the vulnerable. It's one thing if people choose to go to their church, it's quite another if they associate meeting basic human needs with religious activities. I had several clients who relied on resources given at one such outpost in another city. While the outpost purported to simply exist to serve the needy, all the volunteers would insist on praying with those who came in for help. Some of them would joke that they'd have to pray the rosary in order to get the light bill paid. While I realize they are two separate organizations, I offer the anecdote to illuminate what this group of people is actually proposing to do. Indeed, they talk about providing "spiritual support" to those seeking aid; this is a thinly veiled way of saying that

they will be proselytizing to the needy-taking advantage of people who are living in utter desperation to convert them to their religion. They are proposing to run an outpost of the Catholic church, not a true social service organization.

They state that their volunteers will receive training from “counselors” from the psychology department of Divine Mercy University in Arlington. This “University” is not recognized as legitimate in the field of mental health by virtue of its mission and practices which promote proselytizing over practicing research-based mental health service. It’s mission reveals it’s true nature, not one of a legitimate academic institution, but an arm of the Catholic church: *“DMU seeks to further the science and professional practice of psychology and counseling, through the integration of Catholic-Christian [anthropology](#), [philosophy](#), and [theology](#). The need for mental health practitioners with a firm and comprehensive understanding of Catholic teaching, culture, and history inspired the establishment of this institution.”* Contrast this to the mission of the Psychology Department at Howard University, a legitimate academic institution that prepares students for careers in the field of mental health: *“Our focus on scholarship, research, and service provides an excellent foundation for graduates of the program to pursue careers in the psychological sciences or related fields.”*

I am most certainly NOT comfortable having volunteers with inadequate training serving vulnerable people ON MY BLOCK.

Can they not pool their resources and support existing social service organizations?

This Group is Not Prepared

One of my jobs as a social worker was to run a battered women’s shelter, which was a program that relied on the kindness and commitment of multiple volunteers to serve families who became homeless due to violence; in fact, I started my career as one of them. As an organization, we recognized that it was completely inappropriate to have volunteers providing counseling of any sort to the families in need-too many things can go wrong if you do not have the training to manage the deep needs of people in crisis. Whenever volunteers were present, so were paid staff who had received rigorous training. Receiving training for two days does not prepare someone for providing quality services to the needy. The homeless are some of the neediest of the needy; NIH reports that 25% of them are mentally ill, and 25% are chemically dependent. These sorts of intractable problems cannot be adequately addressed or managed by people who received two hours of training from a church. The SUP fails to outline who will supervise the proposed volunteers, how they will be managed and held accountable, and how the quality of services provided will be guaranteed. The fact that the SUP does talk about volunteers receiving training from a pseudo-academic institution illuminates the very poor preparedness of this group to deliver quality services that the homeless surely deserve.

The SUP articulates nothing about policies and procedures for handling their clientele should problems arise. We all know that these types of organizations are magnets for public urination and disturbances of the peace. People get frustrated if they think they are not receiving services they need, they might pick a fight with another client, or with a volunteer and leave

angry. How would their volunteers deal with either of these types of scenarios? And others? The organizers have not thought it through. They have not “actively engaged the neighbors in having a voice in the development of our policies and procedures.” Nor have they legitimately communicated what their policies and procedures will be.

The study of “Catholic-Christian anthropology, philosophy, and theology” does not adequately prepare individuals to serve a population with legitimate needs for qualified service. Why not support organizations that are already in existence and can do this? Why waste the time of the needy on sham services from people unprepared to provide real ones?

They are simply not prepared to provide services to this population, and no evidence suggests that this will change.

This Group Does Not Care About My Neighborhood

After realizing it was a bad idea to propose this organization without engaging the neighbors, the group thought it was a good idea to go door-to-door to speak with us. This was supposed to happen during two separate ranges of dates, but they were not organized enough to make the first one, so they came around last weekend. I was not home when they came, but they left a crumpled copy of the narrative description section SUP on my doorstep. Why would they not simply host us at the proposed space, advertising a night when we could all go and engage with them, instead of the hit-or-miss door-to-door campaign? If they really wanted to engage with us that is what they would have done.

Another example of their disregard for my neighborhood is their insistence in the first two SUPs that they will not come up with a plan for trash removal until they start providing services. This is not acceptable. Their initial idea to serve 66 meals twice a week, which they dubiously claimed would produce 30 gallons of garbage a week, included a plan for biweekly trash removal. I can't imagine any of the organizers would accept mounds of food trash attracting rodents and roaches stinking in the sun for two weeks on their blocks. The outrageousness of this arrogant proposal is indicative of their utter lack of care and concern they have for my neighborhood. I know that they changed this in the third version of the SUP, but the fact that it was proposed to begin with and even survived a revision after we expressed our concerns to them about it at the Land Use meeting in April. This reflects an attitude of carelessness and arrogance that I fear is will be evidenced in ways we cannot predict should the city allow this organization to open its doors on my block.

I urge you to reject their proposal. The lack of need, preparedness, and concern of my neighborhood all point to a disaster-in-the-making if you allow them to open their doors in my community. They could easily take their care and concern and funnel them into exiting organizations that serve the homeless that are well-designed, well-managed, and prepared to serve this needy community.

Sincerely,
Emily Allen

To: Madeleine Sims
Subject: RE: Letter of Opposition to SUP at 421 Clifford Ave

From: Willet Hossfeld
Sent: Tuesday, May 29, 2018 11:37 AM
To: Madeleine Sims
Subject: Letter of Opposition to SUP at 421 Clifford Ave

To Whom it may concern,

Please remove my contact information from this, but consider this as a letter of opposition to the proposed SUP for 421 Clifford Ave, submitted by the Mother of Light Center (MOLC).

We first learned of the SUP from the Del Ray Citizens Association (DRCA) in April. MOLC listened to concerns from neighbors and adjusted their SUP to hear those concerns, for which they should be commended. However, in the time since then they have misrepresented themselves, and been incredibly vague and dismissive about their activities and stating support from neighbors, which is not entirely true. While the DRCA and some neighbors are in support, those of us who have interacted with MOLC more regularly have concerns, which cannot and should not be glossed over.

MOLC has indicated that they are willing to have a conversation with neighbors and address concerns, however after the meeting in which they said that- I basically had to run after them to track down contact info. This doesn't seem to indicate that they are actually interested in neighbor concerns. They have dismissed questions about screening processes, and security measures as though they are minor concerns. While the operations proposed in the SUP have been scaled back dramatically, the MO presented by them thus far does not indicate that they will be an honest and forthcoming neighborhood partner, as they stated they will be.

While the property in question is indeed a commercial property, it is within 150 feet of a residential neighborhood and is on a predominantly residential street. If indeed, MOLC intends to offer counselling services to those who are in need and disenfranchised, it is important for the residents of Clifford Ave to understand how MOLC will screen to ensure that anyone dangerous is not being brought into the neighborhood, and how precisely MOLC will reject or remove anyone who presents a danger. Any policies and procedures that MOLC has developed should be included in their SUP and considered when the Planning Commission determines whether to approve it.

MOLC's mission is noble, and they should be commended for their commitment to help the less fortunate, however we question the legitimacy of the location, as well as their commitment to providing safe and effective services, as they relate to their clients, their volunteers, and the neighborhood they are proposing to be a part of.

Sincerely
Willet Hossfeld and Lucie Coneys