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Dinkins plans shelter here

Local officials denounce Riverdale homeless site

By LARRY DUBLIN

The Dinkins Administration's plan to build a homeless shelter on a quiet street of private homes in Spuyten Duyvil has evoked anger and bitterness from local elected officials.

In interviews, Councilwoman June Eisland, Assemblyman Oliver Koppell, State Senator Jeffrey Korman, and Congressman Eliot Engel said the one-and-three-quarter-acre site, once the Nipnichsen tennis club,

between Arlington and Fairfield Avenues near West 230 Street, does not make sense either for the homeless or for neighbors of the proposed shelter.

The city would be wasting precious dollars purchasing the site and building the shelter, they argued, when much of the city-owned land in the Bronx has abandoned buildings in relatively good condition.

The officials also warned the

Administration's plan to build shelters in residential neighborhoods, an attempt to comply with the "fair share" guidelines in the new City Charter, is destined to speed the departure of middle class families from the city.

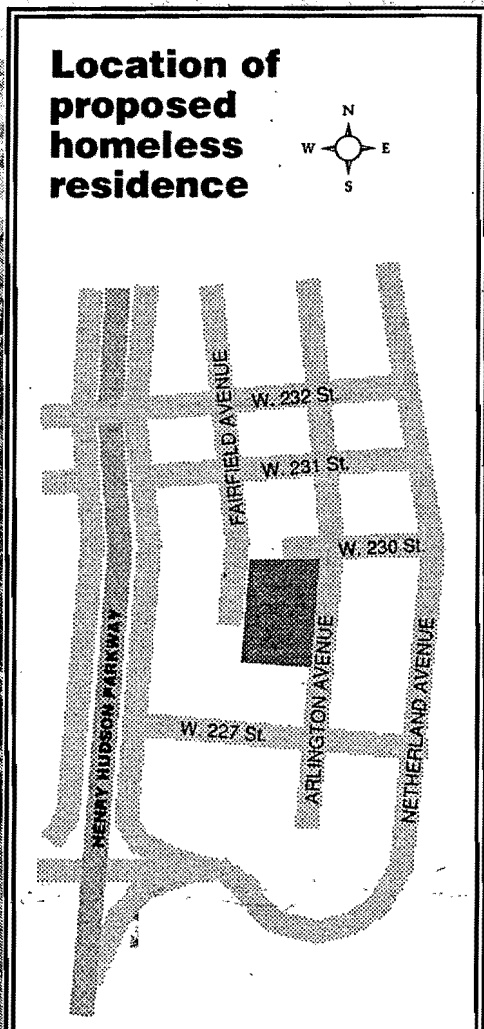
That's the message an angry Mr. Koppell gave Barbara Fife, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Development, in a briefing for legislators last Thursday morning before Ms. Fife announced the Five Year Plan for Housing and Assisting Home-

less Adults.

"It's going to fail," Mr. Koppell told Ms. Fife, hastening to add that he had supported group homes for the retarded in Riverdale and the failed Tibbett Gardens middle income condominium plan next to John F. Kennedy High School.

"It's going to create enormous opposition in my community and oth-

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Neighbors are fearful life here will change

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Dinkins plans shelter here

(Continued from page A1)

ers," Mr. Koppell continued. "It's going to create fear, another force to drive the middle class out of the city."

In selecting sites for 24 shelters of 50 to 150 beds to replace the giant armories that most experts agree do the homeless a disservice, the Dinkins Administration eliminated from consideration the 20 community board areas in the city that have the highest concentration of shelters, concentrating their efforts on the remaining 39 community districts.

Under the plan, borough presidents, Council members, community boards, and other elected officials will have 90 days to react to the sites and offer alternatives.

Local residents will have a chance to comment on the plan in hearings through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, which in most cases would start next spring and last into the fall of 1992. Then construction could take up to four years, said Ms. Fife in a City Hall press conference.

The plan also includes \$80 million to provide permanent housing for 15,981 people over the next five years.

Ms. Fife, Housing Commissioner Felice Michetti, and Human Resources Commissioner Barbara Sabol stressed the new shelters will provide specialized services for the homeless, including mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and employment programs.

But in an interview, Councilwoman Eisland was skeptical that the Administration's good intentions will make a difference when the shelters finally open several years from now. The City

Council's leadership has vowed to derail the plan.

"They're talking about job placement, alcohol detox, and counseling," Ms. Eisland said. "Why haven't they been able to successfully do that in the shelters they already run?"

The Councilwoman said she called Mayor Dinkins and "went toe to toe" with him, arguing that the plan was wrong.

"There are homeless shelters that the administration can't even properly manage at this time," Ms. Eisland said in the interview. "To spread that disgraceful condition to additional neighborhoods makes no sense whatsoever."

Ms. Eisland, who said she has spoken with several other Council members who are opposed to the plan, predicted the Mayor would face a tough battle.

"I think the destabilization of stable neighborhoods makes no sense at all," she said.

Mr. Engel said the plan fails to address the causes of homelessness. "I don't think it solves the problem except to get the homeless people out of Manhattan and settle them in residential, middle class areas in the outer boroughs," said Mr. Engel. "I'm tired of seeing the outer boroughs get kicked in the teeth."

In a statement, Borough President Fernando Ferrer said many of the sites "are completely inappropriate." Asked if Mr. Ferrer would oppose the Riverdale site, a spokesman said the Borough President "wants to have a full public hearing and let the community decide what it wants to do."

"It's clear that it's easier to build a jail, a shelter, or a sludge treatment plant than it is to get the city to do something good for the Bronx," said Mr. Ferrer in the statement.

Martin Zelnik, a Riverdale architect and Fashion Institute of Technology professor who owns the property, declined to set a possible price he would ask the city to pay for the land, since he has always intended to subdivide the site and build private homes on it.

Last spring, Mr. Zelnik filed a plan with the city Department of Buildings to subdivide the 74,000-square-foot lot into 10 or 11 single-family homes that he could build within the existing zoning, which only allows for single family houses.

Mr. Zelnik said no one from the city had spoken to him about the land. He learned it was on the list of shelter sites when he read newspaper accounts Friday.

Like the politicians interviewed, Mr. Zelnik questioned the Administration's decision to spend money acquiring land and building shelters, when there are many structurally-sound abandoned buildings in the city.

"Here we're talking about raw land where the city would have to construct a new facility," said Mr. Zelnik. "There are existing facilities in Riverdale, as well as other communities."

He suggested Manhattan College's West Hill campus on Fieldston Road, and the failed Highview condominium on Waldo Avenue near West 238 Street. At the press conference, Ms. Fife said the city is prepared to obtain some of the land through condemna-

"There are homeless shelters that the administration can't even properly manage at this time. To spread that disgraceful condition to additional neighborhoods makes no sense whatsoever."

—June Eisland

tion, if necessary.

Ms. Fife emphasized that the Administration is prepared to substitute better alternatives for the announced sites, and described the upcoming 90-day period as a dialogue between the administration and politicians and community representatives.

But Charles Moerdler, chairman of Community Board 8's Land Use Committee, ridiculed those assertions.

"If [Mayor Dinkins] was genuinely interested in what the community thought, he would have had a dialogue in advance," said Mr. Moerdler. "When a fellow sits down at a negotiating table and pulls out a pistol, that's not a particularly good way of establishing a dialogue, but it's a hell of a way of starting a confrontation."

Mr. Engel also bristled at the Administration's reassurances. "I don't think the way you start a process is to create panic and fear in many communities," he said.

Mr. Moerdler accused Mayor Dinkins of using the homeless shelter to punish Council members who supported him on some issues.

"Look at where they've dropped," he said. "These are people who have not been very enthusiastic supporters. This is the most administration that's been around since Abe Beame."

"I don't think it's appropriate to have a planning perspective for a shelter house 50 to 150 people in a residential community," said Mr. Konrad. "The least appropriate spot is in a community board."

Ms. Eisland said a site on 180th Avenue in nearby Norwood would be a poor choice.

The executive committee of Community Board 8 was scheduled to hold a special meeting Wednesday evening to discuss the plan, Mr. Moerdler said.

Dunked cars get the hoot but shoppers are furious

HALLOWEEN ARTISTRY



Photo by Gretchen McHugh

JASON VEGA, 8, a student at PS 24, painted a hand rising out of the grave on a W. 235 Street storefront Saturday. He was one of hundreds of local youngsters who took part in the Riverdale Kiwanis Club's annual Halloween window painting contest. Winners are slated to be announced in next week's Press.

Foes organize to fight shelter in Riverdale

By LARRY DUBLIN

Three weeks after the Dinkins Administration announced a plan to build a homeless shelter in Spuyten Duyvil, community leaders have begun to mobilize to fight it.

Feelings of bitterness and betrayal laced the comments of residents and elected officials interviewed this week.

"There's a concern that anyone with any sense of credibility could never have chosen a site like that," said Martin Wolpoff, chairman of Community Board 8.

Board 8 and the Riverdale Community Council will host an informational meeting on the plan on Thursday, Nov. 14, at 8 p.m. at the gymnasium of the St. Gabriel School, Arlington Ave. and W. 235 St., up the street from the site, at Arlington Ave. and W. 230 St.

"We have severe doubts about who we're dealing with and what their motivations are," said Mr. Wolpoff.

The Spuyten Duyvil Homeowners Association and Johnson Avenue/West 235 Street Merchants Association were planning members-only meetings for this week to discuss the plan.

Local elected officials are unified in their opposition to the plan. Councilwoman June Eisland said she is working with Borough President Fernando Ferrer and other Bronx Council members to battle the plan. There are six other proposed Bronx sites, all in the northern part of the borough.

"People are angry and frustrated," said Ms. Eisland. "They hate to live with uncertainty, and I agree with them. This is like a big cloud hanging over the whole north Bronx."

ment Barbara Fife has said the city's plan to spread 24 shelters to neighborhoods with the fewest number of shelters is in keeping with the "fair share" mandate of the new City Charter.

But residents questioned the logic of building a shelter in a comfortable residential neighborhood.

"If I were a homeless person I would resent it if I were in a wealthy neighborhood and I saw all these other people with every thing," said Ginevra Padula, a resident of Arlington Avenue, a few doors down from the site. "It would bother me."

"It's an ill-conceived plan," said Dolores Lenane, also of Arlington Avenue. "It's not a viable solution to the homeless problem. Putting a roof over someone's head... if we can believe what some of the homeless have said, they don't want that roof."

Herbert Lieberman, a member of Board 8 who helped lead the battle against the failed middle income Tibbett Gardens condominium plan and heads the Coalition for Responsible Planning (CORP), said homeless people would find a residential community frustrating.

"The homeless have a tendency to approach vehicles and people on the street where there are throngs of people," he said.

Several community leaders challenged the conception that opponents of the plan are simply guilty of the NIMBY (not in my backyard) syndrome.

"NIMBY may be justified on occasion," said Assemblyman Oliver Koppell. "NIMBY is admittedly a response people give for facilities they find unpalatable. If the city proposed to

(Continued on page A2)

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RICARDO FERNANDEZ, the new president of Lehman College.

Photo by Gretchen McHugh

New Lehman president takes long look ahead

(Continued from page A1)

didn't have homelessness to the extent that we have it. We didn't have crack or drugs. And we didn't have a public education system that is in dire need of reform."

Dr. Fernandez took the Lehman job after working for the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee for 18 years, where he rose to assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs and made dropout prevention something of a specialty. He got his Ph.D. in romance languages from Princeton University in 1970.

Dr. Fernandez lives in Riverdale with his wife Patricia, who is an attorney, and sons David, 9, and Jose, 6. He has three other grown children. David and Jose attend PS 24 and play in the South Riverdale Soccer League. Dr.

Fernandez serves on the board of Wave Hill.

The new Lehman president says he is quite impressed with the college. He warmly praised the Center for the Performing Arts and art gallery, the "beautiful" campus, and several academic departments, including English, Physics, Mathematics, History, and Biology.

Naturally, there is room for improvement, said the president. Dr. Fernandez has started a departmental review cycle that will see each of the college's 29 departments evaluated every five years. In addition to analysis within each department, a panel of reviewers—probably one faculty member from Lehman, one from another City University College, and one from a university outside the sys-

tem will analyze six departments per year, interviewing faculty members and students.

"The idea is really not to criticize or put down," said Dr. Fernandez. "It's more an opportunity to have others comment on what they see to be the strengths and weaknesses."

"When I came here I was surprised we didn't have such a system in place. That's something that's absolutely necessary." Much of his first year, Dr. Fernandez said, has been spent meeting small groups of faculty members and students.

"There was a kind of mentality of 'us versus the administration'— us being the students, or segments of the faculty," he said. "I tried to break down some barriers to communication."

nesses in the state seeking to expand. Opponents argue that the state-guaranteed bonds are unneeded subsidies to businesses that the debt-ridden state cannot afford. Proponents say the JDA is self-sufficient and is a needed aid to small business.

Proposal number two would allow the exchange of 50 acres of protected Adirondack land to allow for a tree-free zone near an airport. While the

state's canals would be maintained, the tolls used by recreational boaters. Some canal lands would be used for development. Opponents there should be a committee for the development of not a series of ad hoc projects, believe will follow the proposal.

Foes organize to fight shelter in Riverdale

(Continued from page A1)

put a new Con Ed power station in Riverdale people would react and say 'not in my backyard,' and they'd be right."

Riverdale has done its share for the homeless and other unfortunate people, Mr. Koppell argued. While it's not an actual shelter, the Riverdale Manor, a nursing home at Broadway and the Henry Hudson Parkway, houses people who cannot live on their own, he noted.

"If they couldn't live there, they would be homeless," said Mr. Koppell.

Ms. Eisland counseled opponents of the plan to resist looking for another, more appropriate nearby site, and others agreed with her.

"Why offer an alternative site when they picked a site that's so bad and never spoke to us in advance?" asked Mr. Wolpoff.

At a meeting of Board 8's executive committee Oct. 16, Mr. Wolpoff asked the chairs of several committees to prepare reports on the proposal. "We're going to research before we take any position," Mr. Wolpoff said.

Ms. Padula said each of the 30 homeowners on Arlington Avenue she spoke to have said they will work to

"It doesn't make sense to me to spend millions of dollars when we could spend that money for social programs."
 —Genevra

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Shelter storm reflects confusion

Officials took wait-and-see approach to 'fair share'

(Continued from page A1)

"In the past, the city has shown such bad faith, had we suggested an alternate site [for the homeless shelter] they might have used that for an additional site," said Mr. Friedlander. "They don't give you credit for a good idea."

In 1987, Mr. Ferrer recalled, Community Board 1 in the South Bronx made a deal with the Koch Administration and agreed to allow the city to build one homeless shelter in the Mott Haven section. The Mayor built two.

Asked if he had suggested other sites for homeless shelters in the Bronx, Mr. Ferrer said that would have been "mean-spirited."

"If I [did that], I'd forfeit my right to public office," he said.

The "fair share" clause in the charter, which ostensibly assures an even distribution of unwanted facilities throughout the city, is dominated by two key factors, said Mr. Ferrer: the administration's ability to build facilities that no one wants, and its power to define what the city needs.

"When they have both, they can control the debate," Mr. Ferrer said. "Welcome to the wonderful world of fair share," said Mr. Ferrer, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

At a workshop on the fair share process at Hunter College two weeks ago, the Department of City Planning distributed a packet of examples of how some community boards have helped site facilities.

Included was a Feb. 11, 1991 letter from Community Board 2 in Manhattan to Mayor Dinkins and Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger. The board listed as desirable a facility to supervise adult probationers and training centers for the poor. Among the "undesirable" listings were a homeless shelter.

In contrast, Board 8's chairman, Mr. Wolpoff, opted to criticize the "great confusion" generated by the arrival of the Mayor's Statement of Needs in a March 19, 1991 letter to Richard Schaffer,

director of the Department of City Planning.

"We still do not know what is fair share," wrote Mr. Wolpoff. "Can the board negotiate the taking of two of one agency's requests in an attempt to forestall or prevent the establishment of another agency's request?"

Those questions have still not been answered, said Mr. Wolpoff this week.

"If we get six of this type, does that eliminate two of that type?" he asked. "It appears each agency can act on their own and say 'we're giving out a fair share.'"

Irving Ladimer, a member of the Spuyten Duyvil Homeowners Association, which opposes the local site at W. 230 St. and Arlington Ave., said the fair share guidelines have been confusing from the outset.

"It has not been presented in such a way that either the community board or local organizations understand anything more than a general idea that the administration is scattering things throughout the city," he said.

Told that community residents have interpreted the administration's list of proposed shelter sites as the facilities that the city in fact intends to build, Ms. Cox said the Department of City Planning is "damned if we do, damned if we don't."

"It's truly unfair for people to say we've laid it out there without any consultation," she said. "The city did come out with a preliminary proposal, but we were told in no uncertain terms that people want to hear specific proposals."

Ms. Cox said that community boards throughout the city have mistakenly assumed that the time for meaningful discussion about the homeless shelters has passed.

"The list of possible sites was essentially an invitation to respond," she said, "not like some kind of notice that says 'here, it's done, it's too late to do anything about it.'"

"It's not like something irrevocable has happened," she said. "It's not too late for community

boards to play an important role."

Though the residents they represent are apt to vigorously oppose public facilities such as homeless shelters, community boards must rise to their new level of responsibility, said Ms. Cox.

"Every community board has to weigh whether it's more effective to just say no to a proposal or to respond and have some back and forth discussion with the city," she said. "That would mean the community would have to think about alternate sites. I realize that's a hot potato. It's hard for a community board to do."

When the city tallies the number of facilities in a community, it counts city-funded, city-operated facilities. But Mr. Ferrer argued that privately-operated, city-funded ones should be counted as well.

Nursing homes do not count in the city's tabulation of the number of "beds" in a community, noted Mr. Wolpoff, though jails and homeless shelters do.

"Nursing homes add an institutional character to a community," said Mr. Wolpoff. "There is less vitality when a nursing home is there." Opponents to the local shelter have noted the many nursing homes in the Riverdale-Kingsbridge area.

Though some Riverdale residents would like to see him at the forefront of the opposition to the homeless shelter, Mr. Ferrer said that time will come.

"I know the community board is going to oppose it," he said of the Spuyten Duyvil shelter. "My opposition is based on a different criteria. I'm going to look at it programatically."

Rather than rush to oppose the plan, Mr. Ferrer is putting together as strong an argument as possible.

"I can say 'No, I'm not going to stand for it,' and everyone will throw me a ticker-tape parade. But that would not be responsible. If I make a recommendation, it must be airtight. It can't be auditory nonsense."

Shelter has \$4 M pricetag

If the city decides to build a homeless shelter at W. 230 St. and Arlington Ave. it will cost \$80,000 per bed to construct.

The entire tab for the shelter would be \$4 million.

Representatives from Mayor Dinkins' task force on the homeless visited the meeting of the executive board of Community Board 8 last week, and told members that the site will most likely serve 50 homeless men with mental health problems.

"They indicated that if we came up with an alternate site, they would seriously consider it," said board member Herbert Lieberman. "But we as a board would not come up with an alternate site. We don't believe any place in the borough would be benefited by having a homeless shelter."

Board 8 Chairman Martin Wolpoff said the city representatives said they need to build 350 beds in the Bronx, and do not need to build at all seven suggested sites.

One likely scenario, the representatives told Mr. Wolpoff, is to build two 150-bed shelters and one 50-bed shelter in the borough.

Under initial consideration, the task force representatives told Mr. Wolpoff was a small lot near the intersection of Kappock St. and Palisade Ave. But that site has been rejected.

After the meeting, Mr. Lieberman followed the city representatives out into the parking lot. "They indicated that this site was not as good a site as they thought it was when it was originally selected," he said.

City plans renovation of 230 St. bridge

By TAMI LUHBY

The city Department of Transportation will replace and renovate the bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway and the Conrail tracks at W. 230 Street, starting next summer. During the construction, which is expected to last 18 months, at least one lane of traffic in each direction will be closed, said Monica Panzani, the project manager and administrative engineer for DOT. Pedestrians will also be able to cross the bridge at all times during construction.

The construction will take place in several stages, the first of which is the closing and demolishing of the southern half of the bridge over the seldom-used Conrail tracks. Although the concrete supports of the bridge will be replaced, the DOT will erect new steel beams and a new concrete deck on top. This is expected to take four months.

The second stage will involve the closing and relaying of the deck of the southern entrance ramp to the Major Deegan Expressway. The top of the deck of the roadway and the sidewalk of the Deegan bridge will be replaced with new concrete. The steel structure will be painted. The work will last five months, and will be done as the new Conrail bridge is being laid. Then the south side of the bridge

Field wine easily

VERDALE PRESS

Thursday, November 21, 1991

'Not here!' residents cry at angry shelter meeting

By LARRY DUBI

Nearly 500 residents crammed the Gabriel School gymnasium and vented their rage at Mayor David Dinkins' plan to build a homeless shelter on Arlington Avenue in Spuyten Duyvil.

With very few exceptions, the city's message for three city blocks was loud and clear: a shelter for "disturbed" men would be a curse to the neighborhood and themselves.

In scores of prepared speeches over two and a half hours, residents demanded everything from the "fair share" clause in the City Charter that is meant to ensure an even distribution of utilities, to the crime spree that has become the logical result of a homeless population here.

But the audience's collective anger was also evident in catcalls and insults—not only at the few who supported the plan, but at those who criticized it but went beyond the allotted three minutes.

Before the meeting, James and Dick Litman of the Housing Resources Administration, and Dick Devine, director of the Bronx Housing Coordination, told the crowd that the 35 sites announced were only proposed sites. The crowd that every objection taken into consideration.

If the audience's sense of outrage had a place a shelter here," said.

But that did not calm the anger. Many speakers said they were simply going through the motions of an open process.

Mikhail Tsinberg, a 19-year-old from the Soviet Union who moved to the Bronx 11 years ago, said the Administration's behavior was a betrayal of his native land.

"The basic guideline of the country was no matter how wrong you're wrong; no matter how wrong the government is right now, what is happening here again will burst into applause.

(Con)

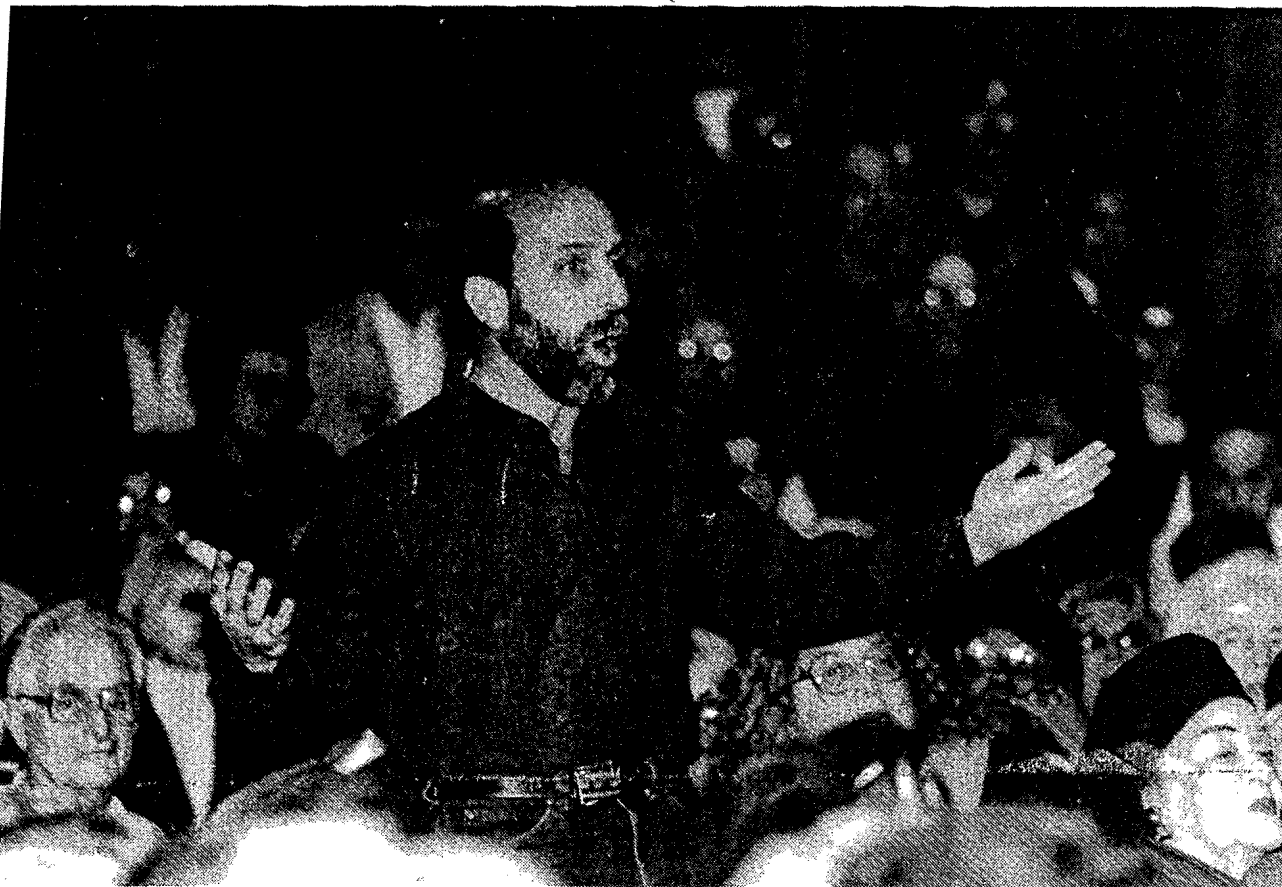


Photo by Gretchen McHugh

AN ANGRY resident questions the proposal to put a homeless shelter on Arlington Avenue in Spuyten Duyvil.

Bronx to Dinkins: don't do it

By ED PURCE

Speaker after speaker denounced Mayor David Dinkins' proposal to build seven homeless shelters in the Bronx at a public hearing held at Lehman College Monday.

Local, state, and federal elected officials as well as nearly three dozen residents from around the north Bronx slammed the Dinkins plan, saying it was "flawed" and would destroy middle-class communities.

Councilwoman June Eiland, Assembly-

man Oliver Koppell, and Borough President Fernando Ferrer reiterated their opposition to the plan, which includes a site on Arlington Avenue in Spuyten Duyvil.

Ms. Eiland railed against the proposal, calling it vague and saying the sites were chosen "at best in a peculiar manner."

She also doubted that the sites would become "the center of the universe" for people who need rehabilitation to overcome drug addictions, who need counseling to get back on their feet.

Mr. Ferrer said he opposed the plan because it institutionalizes homelessness

and poverty. He called the plan "flawed and half-baked."

Although there is a legitimate need, the Mayor's proposal is the wrong plan at the wrong time because it does not explain how it will provide the services many of the homeless need, Mr. Ferrer said.

And Mr. Koppell said placing a homeless shelter in a low-density neighborhood is "wrong-headed." He also noted that fair share does not mean that if one community has, for example, a prison, that every other one should.

(Continued on page A2)

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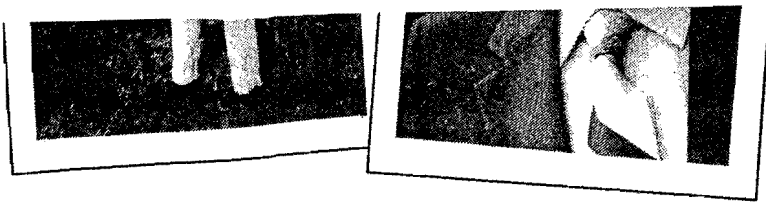
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Charles Smith at Pearl Harbor
in 1941, left, and at home in
Riverdale today.



(Continued on page A2)

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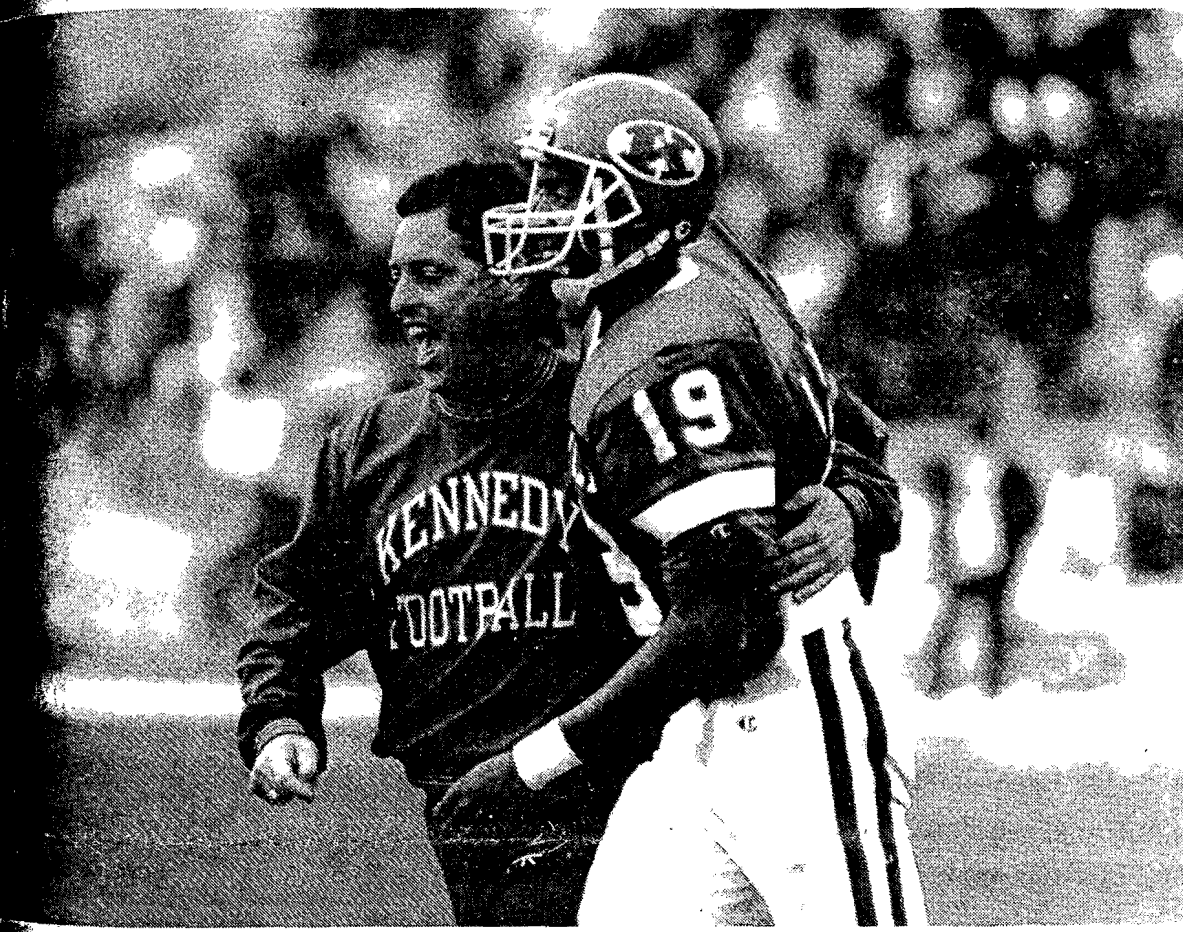


Photo by Gretchen McHugh

JERRY HOROWITZ exults along with Giscard Bernard seconds after his 32-yard touchdown catch out the

Local officials ask Is Riverdale too crowded for homeless?

By LARRY DUBLIN

What would happen to traffic on the narrow streets of Spuyten Duyvil during the three to four years it would take to construct a homeless shelter on Arlington Avenue in Spuyten Duyvil?

How many of the residents of a temporary shelter would return to the streets as soon as they left the shelter?

Should nursing homes be included when tallying the number of institutional beds included in a community?

These are some of the questions raised by Community Board 8 and Borough President Fernando Ferrer in their responses to Mayor Dinkins' Five Year Plan for Housing and Assisting the Homeless, under which 24 temporary shelters would be built in middle class neighborhoods throughout the city.

The Arlington Avenue site is one of 35 pro-

posed shelters in the city. A team of 19 raise larger issues, especially the level of saturation of unwanted facilities in the Bronx, compared with more upscale boroughs.

But both documents serve to drive home the rallying cry of the nearly 500 residents who jammed a public hearing on the proposal at St. Gabriel School last month: a homeless shelter in Spuyten Duyvil would waste precious city money, damage the community, and—because of its isolation—fail to help the men who would live there as well.

In their report to Board 8 Chairman Martin Wolpoff, Housing Committee Chairman Arnold Stanley and committee member Robert W. Wagner argue that the plan violates three sections of the City Planning Commission's Criteria for the Location of City Facilities. Mark Friedlander, a Board 8 member and president of the Riverdale Jewish Community Council, echoed that theme at last month's hearing.

Traffic generated by the construction and