



## **THE ST. PAUL'S SENTINEL**

### ***Honoring and preserving our community's heritage***

***A publication of the Committee to Save St. Paul's/St. Paul's Conservancy Corp., July 29, 2008***

#### **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE REPORT AVAILABLE**

On July 17, the Board of Trustees received the Mayor's Committee on St. Paul's report from chairman Trustee Tom Lamberti. That report is available on the village website ([www.gardencityny.net](http://www.gardencityny.net), click administration on the left, and you will find the report under current issues on the right). The Mayor's column in the local newspapers says the report is also available in the public library and at the business office in Village Hall. The Committee to Save St. Paul's encourages all residents to obtain a copy of that report and review it very carefully.

#### **COMMITTEE TO SAVE ST. PAUL'S RESPONSE**

The Committee to Save St. Paul's has reviewed the report and finds its recommendation unacceptable. The deal that is being presented is a give-away of a priceless and irreplaceable piece of real estate. It risks changing forever the character of our community. The Village will lose valuable public space for use by residents that can never be reclaimed. Regarding the plan...

- AvalonBay's plan contemplates virtually no public use of the historic Main Building. While earlier plans called for the creation of a community center on the first floor, in the most recent plan, 12,500 square feet of dedicated community space is gone—except for token use of the chapel one day a week.
- The size of additional construction on the St. Paul's property has mushroomed from 3 to 4 stories, from 48,000 to 78,000 square feet. This massive new structure will house at least 46 apartments, in addition to 62 more in the Main Building. This new structure will be nearly equal in size to the existing building. No environmental study has yet been made to evaluate the impact of such massive development on the site.
- What started out as a revenue-producing business has turned into a tax give-away for the developer that will place added stress on Village services and, more importantly, on the schools, with no or little tax benefit. The Village, the School District, the Town, and the County, will not receive real estate taxes for the development for 20 years! Instead, under a proposed IDA-approved PILOT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) program, AvalonBay would get a \$27 million tax break! Furthermore, during the first two years AvalonBay would pay ZERO! In the next seven years it would be required to make a total of only \$198,838 in PILOT payments to all the taxing jurisdictions (an average annual payment of just \$28,405). At a time when taxpayers in this Village are typically paying annual taxes of \$15,000 or more for their homes, how can the Village justify asking AvalonBay to pay yearly PILOTS in this minimal amount when it will be getting the right to build

more than 100 new housing units? What's more, the school district will receive only about 60% of this amount. That means that current residents will bear the burden of any new children who enter the schools as a result of this development.

- Apart from the token PILOT payments, AvalonBay will pay NOTHING for the property. No lease payments are required. No payments are to be made for the term of this proposed 99 year lease. Although a token "profit share" program is outlined, there is little likelihood that the Village will see revenue there.
- The give-away includes not only the loss of acres of green space, but also the loss of parking space frequently used during special athletic events and tournaments. Where will residents park for such events? Will Soccer-fest have to be moved? What will happen the day of the Turkey Trot?
- Seniors will get almost nothing from the plan. Perhaps a few will choose to rent a high-end apartment. But wouldn't it be better if seniors could have a really nice community center in the Main Building, instead of just a few little rooms on Golf Club Lane and in one of the cottages?
- The claim that the AvalonBay plan is fair and equitable, like the claim that the plan is the only way to save the Main Building, hinges upon a suspect appraisal. Whereas the property was appraised in 2005 to have a value of approximately \$20 million, the Village now wants us to believe that the property has a value of "negative" \$14.1 million. In other words, that the property is less than worthless. We don't believe it. The property is priceless. It cannot be replaced. It would be wrong to give it away. It would be wrong to abandon it. It would be wrong to demolish St. Paul's.
- The AvalonBay plan has little chance of getting the broad-based support needed for home rule/parkland alienation support. Who can expect the State Department of Parks to close their eyes to a giveaway of 8 acres of incredibly valuable parkland, with no consideration for public use, loss of green space, new construction, and minimal historic preservation!

The issuance of the Mayor's Committee report can be a new beginning in the process of redevelopment of St. Paul's. ***The choice between AvalonBay, yes or no, is a decision for this community to make. Please remember, it's not too late to revisit the options of public restoration, threshold use or a public/private use with no added construction.*** The advocates for private development have not given these alternatives a fair hearing before the community.

The Committee to Save St. Paul's suggests that residents study the report and ask the tough questions of our Trustees. Again, we urge you to write your opinion to the Editor of the *Garden City News* ([editor@gcnews.com](mailto:editor@gcnews.com)), and Senator Kemp Hannon ([Hannon@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:Hannon@senate.state.ny.us)). Please feel free to reply to this email, or email Maureen Traxler at [mtraxler@optonline.net](mailto:mtraxler@optonline.net), and let the Committee to Save St. Paul's know how you feel about the AvalonBay plan. Thank you again for your support.

**PLEASE FORWARD THIS E-NEWSLETTER TO YOUR FRIENDS.**

***The Committee to Save St. Paul's, PO Box 7642, Garden City, NY 11530, [www.savestpauls.org](http://www.savestpauls.org)***