

## WANAQUE

# Borough clears way for group home on Hagstrom Boulevard

## Bergen United Way to construct and operate facility

BY HOLLY STEWART  
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Borough officials are moving forward with plans to construct a group home for the developmentally disabled in order to provide for supportive and special needs housing as defined by New Jersey's Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) regulations.

The property known as Block 313, Lot 2 on the borough tax map is just over half an acre in size and has a street address of 10 Warren Hagstrom Boulevard. It was purchased by the borough this summer for \$300,000. The money was appropriated from the borough's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, along with an extra \$20,000 to cover transactional costs. Details of the initial appropriation were made public in ordinance No. 16-0-12, which was originally introduced at the meeting of the mayor and council held on May 14 and adopted on June 11.

The money in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund account comes primarily from COAH-required development fees collected from residential and non-residential developers. COAH regulations also allow municipalities to deposit several other different kinds of payments and income into their trust fund accounts, including rental income from municipally-operated units, proceeds from the sale of affordable units, and repayments from affordable housing program loans.

With the financing for the project already in place, Borough Administrator Tom Carroll announced during the Sept. 10 Borough Council meeting that the borough "will have no other finan-

cial responsibility for the building."

Since purchasing the property, the borough has written another ordinance which extensively modifies the zoning district known as the Active Adult Housing zone (AAH) in order to accommodate specifics relating to the design and use of the group home. Ordinance No. 23-0-12 was introduced at the Borough Council meeting held on Oct. 15 and passed upon its first reading. Its public hearing and consideration for final passage are planned for the next meeting of the mayor and council, scheduled to take place on Dec. 10.

Ordinance No. 23-0-12 states that the new Supportive and Special Needs Housing zone (SNH) will be overlaid within the AAH zone and includes "lot 2 and a portion of lot 1 in block 313." As stated in that document, the zone is "being created so as to meet a need for residences to serve (an) underserved population and those in need of supportive housing opportunities." The ordinance goes on to detail permitted uses and specifications of the SNH zone, some of which include the following: Any dwelling built within the SNH zone will be limited to a maximum of one 3,000-square-foot residential structure to contain no more than six residential units and 10 bedrooms located under one continuous roof; the building's height shall not exceed 20 feet from grade; it will be set back a minimum of 15 feet from any lot line or road; the SNH zone will contain no more than one residential structure; and no more than 12 individuals will be permitted to occupy the residential units in any continuous 24-hour period.

Shortly after entering into a

contract to purchase the property on Warren Hagstrom Boulevard, the borough also entered into an agreement with Bergen County United Way (BCUW) and its partner the Madeline Group, a not-for-profit corporation, to construct and operate a special needs housing development project on the site. Carroll told *Suburban Trends* on Sept. 13 that BCUW/Madeline will be responsible for all aspects of developing the property. When asked why the BCUW/Madeline had been chosen to perform this function, Carroll said, "They have a proven track record of being able to successfully complete similar projects in the region."

BCUW President Tom Toronto spoke with *Suburban Trends* on Nov. 29. He said that the group home on Warren Hagstrom Boulevard would be "similar in style to a project we've recently completed or one that we are still working on." Both of those developments are in Allendale. Regarding the design of the Wanaque project, he said, "We're in the final steps with our architect to come up with a site plan," which will be sent to borough officials when it is completed. After that, Toronto said, the project would require two levels of approval before being permitted to proceed: "one from the Highlands Commission, because Wanaque does lie within its jurisdiction, and another through the local zoning board."

If the approval processes go smoothly, Toronto said, "we could potentially break ground (on construction) next summer." With BCUW/Madeline projects averaging a nine- to 10-month building period, Toronto concluded, "We could be looking at a spring 2014



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date for occupancy.”

Toronto took a step back to explain the full extent of the role **BCUW/Madeline** plays in this kind of development project. In addition to securing the funding required to

complete construction, Toronto said that BCUW/Madeline would oversee and award bids for contractor work, determine the nature of the population to be served, and find a service provider to manage

daily aspects of life in the group home once occupancy is achieved.

“We don’t just build it and leave,” he said.

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PHOTO BY HOLLY STEWART

This empty lot at 10 Warren Hagstrom Boulevard has been purchased by the borough and is proposed as the site of a group home for the developmentally disabled.