

Town of Cheverly
News and Announcements
Residential Re-Entry Center

Volunteers of America Chesapeake (VOAC) attended the January 12th Town Council meeting to present information about a proposed 142 bed facility that will have an additional 70 day cases. These individuals reside off-site but visit at least once a week. The Residential Re-Entry Facility they are proposing to construct in the Cheverly Industrial Park at 4701 Lydell Road is in response to a Federal Bureau of Prisons RFP. The facility would be used to transition inmates from the Federal prison system back to the community and would include programming and monitoring to assist in this process.

VOAC provided a 30 minute overview of their mission, a discussion of the results of their programs, and an overview of the process of successfully winning the RFP.

According to VOAC, they are currently in the proposal process, and have not been selected for a contract to develop and operate a facility. Furthermore, this specific use (a residential reentry center) is not currently allowed in the county because it is not included in the County Zoning Ordinance. According to representatives from VOAC, one of the several critical path steps moving forward is to revise the Zoning Ordinance to include residential reentry centers;

The meeting was attended by more than 135 Cheverly residents and 30 residents participated by either making statements or asking questions of the representatives of VOAC. The majority of the residents, who spoke, spoke in opposition to the facility being located at this location.

You can watch the meeting on the Town's website at: CheverlyMD.gov/Pages/CheverlyMD_meetingbroadcasts.

Below are the issues raised by the residents. At the end of the comments section there is a status of the issue, and a list of officials you may contact to express your views regarding the location of the facility. Please include the Mayor (mayor@cheverly-md.gov) on any communications so that we can better understand the views of the community.

COMMENTS:

Agreement that a Re-Entry Facility is needed in County: Virtually every resident agreed that a Re-Entry Facility was needed in the county. However, most residents felt that the site proposed by the VOAC was not appropriate for reasons listed below.

Size of the Re-Entry Center: According to data on the Bureau of Prisons website, the 142 bed facility with an additional 70 day cases would make this the **5th largest** facility in the country. A center this size would strain the small industrial park (only 15 buildings), and is too large for a location this close to residential properties.

Proximity to Recreational Facilities and Uses: This large facility would be located within 800 feet of the Cheverly Community Pool and Euclid Park. These recreational facilities are used by children of all ages. Fields for organized and casual sporting events, as well as new playgrounds draw many people to these areas. In addition, there is a long-standing certified in-home day care facility ¼ mile of the facility.

The RFP expresses that a facility should not be within a half mile of a school. Children at playgrounds and pools are even less supervised than at a school. Furthermore, the RFP requires the application to document “schools day care, historical landmarks, and other residential facilities within ½ mile of the proposed facilities and provide a narrative “...concerning possible opposition...” The only information the Town has seen related to this does not appear to address any of the above listed uses.

Proximity to Judith P Hoyer Early Learning Center: This facility is less than 6 tenths of a mile from the Board of Education's Judith Hoyer Early Learning Center for Toddlers. While the RFP specifically excludes Re-Entry Facilities when a school is within a half mile, this is only one tenth of a mile outside the radius and is located directly on the route that Re-Entry residents would be commuting on.

Proximity to Newly Designed Bike / Pedestrian Path: The proposed site directly abuts a 30% designed bike/pedestrian path that connects the Cheverly Community directly to the newly opened Anacostia Bike Path. The path is designed to connect Cheverly by cutting a path through the woods from the pool to the industrial park. This path would be a direct route from the proposed Re-Entry site the pool and park facilities mentioned above, increasing ease of access.

The resident who has committed a property easement for this path will withdraw his commitment, if the facility is located at this site. This would put an end to this community asset.

Proximity to Newly Planned Residential Development: Prince George's Hospital is moving in three years and Cheverly has been working with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission to redevelop the site with high density housing. The proposed site is less than 2 tenths of mile from the planned development and this site is located at one of the two primary entrances to the site. Development is also planned along the Tuxedo Road corridor. The Tuxedo Road corridor is the primary commuting route residents of the site to arrive at the Cheverly Metro.

The RFP expresses a desire for seclusion by asking that the site be located in an industrial zone, this development is too close. Residents expressed that this facility could further discourage development in our community.

Zoning Issues: Currently a Re-Entry Facility is not allowed in I-1 zones, or in any zoning district, in Prince George's County. Legislation will have to be passed to allow a Re-Entry Facility in the Cheverly Industrial Park. Cheverly has no ability to vote yea / no, and must rely on the County Council to ensure that legislation properly considers the issues raised by Cheverly residents.

Potential Impact to Cheverly Industrial Park: Residents expressed concern about the possibility that this use and real or perceived external impacts at the site could possibly impact the financial viability of the entire Industrial Park. The Industrial Park has fewer than 15 buildings total, and this site sits at the primary intersection. Tax revenues generated in the park are important to the Town's budget, and are a part of our overall revenue program.

Transparency of the Selection Process: Residents expressed concerns that the location had been selected without any public input. Since the site was selected without input, VOAC was apparently unaware of the Cheverly Sector Plan process which outlined the planned development at the hospital site and the bike bath that directly connects this site to the recreational areas at the pool and the park.

VOAC identified the potential site in the Cheverly Industrial Park in July, and sent letters sent to the Department of Prisons regarding VOAC's planned Public Outreach in October; however, no direct contact was made to Cheverly. Cheverly heard secondhand of the proposed facility and contacted VOAC prior to Thanksgiving and discussions began then. Letters sent to the Department of Prisons from VOAC made no mention of the existing park and pool facilities being within 800 feet of the planned facility.

Comparison to VOAC's Orangeville Location: The proposed Cheverly Industrial Park location varies significantly from the existing Orangeville location. The Orangeville location is separated from most residential communities by 4 lane highways and railroad tracks. The site is also secluded from any recreational facilities. Additionally, there are no plans for future development near the existing location.

Strain on Cheverly Resources: Adding a facility of this type to the community would add over 200 people with potential problems to our small community; effectively growing the community by %2.2. Residents expressed concern that more municipal tax dollars would be required to preserve public safety.

Public Safety Issues: Residents reflected that they were extremely concerned about Public Safety Issues primarily due to the proximity of the site, the limited buffers between residential and light industrial, the fact that residents for the facility would be using routes through the community to access transportation. While VOAC outlined statistics that indicated that crime did not increase near Re-Entry Sites residents expressed skepticism and voiced concerns about the proximity of children to site.

Property Values: The audience included many young families who had recently moved into the neighborhood. They expressed concerns about the proximity of the site and that it would

suppress property values. They feared that while actual Public Safety Issues may not increase, the perception that this site was so near to the community and its recreational sites that perception would depress interest in our rapidly growing community. Some indicated that they would not have considered moving to Cheverly if this facility (of this size) were located here. Others indicated that they would consider moving away from Cheverly if the facility is constructed.

What is the Current Status

VOAC indicated they have a conditional contract on the property, dependent on getting the zoning changes and approval of the RFP.

VOAC has drafted zoning legislation but it has not been submitted yet.

It is not clear whether VOAC has completed the submission of their RFP. If so it has been done without a Community Engagement Plan, where the community gave any input.

VOAC indicated that they believed the process the RFP process would end within 90 to 120 days.

Who Should You Contact to Express Your Opinion:

There are two separate conditions required for this facility to be located at this site:

The County Council, would have to pass legislation allowing this type of use in an I-1 industrial zone. At this point VOAC has drafted legislation and distributed to County Councilmembers. However, there has been no bill sponsored or submitted. A bill of this type could be passed quickly but would have to be voted on by subcommittee and the council as a whole. The Town will be monitoring.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons has released the RFP and will be responsible for awarding to the winning entity. The RFP shows a desire for seclusion from residential areas, as it asks for the location in a light industrial area. The RFP also expresses a desire that the facility not be located near children as it asks that the site not be within a half mile of a school.

US Senate and Congress: Given that this is a federal facility, it is worth letting our federal officials know: Senators Cardin and Van Hollen and Congressmen Hoyer and Brown.

County Executive

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