

Mayor Mark

**Gilbert J. Botvin, Ph.D.
Elizabeth M. Botvin, Ph.D.
26 Heathcote Road
Scarsdale, New York 10583**

November 22, 2015

Hon. Mayor Jonathan Mark
and Board of Trustees
Village Hall
1001 Post Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

Re: Monte Nido Application for 2 Morris Lane

Dear Hon. Mayor Mark and Board of Trustees:

We have been Scarsdale residents for over 25 years, living first in Greenacres and most recently in Heathcote. Currently, we reside at 26 Heathcote Road, where we have lived for the past 10 years. We raised our three children in Scarsdale, and consider ourselves immensely fortunate to live in such a beautiful, tranquil, safe, and wonderful community. But, we are concerned that may be about to change. We were incredulous to learn that Scarsdale received notice that Monte Nido, a California-based company, plans to transition the single family home on a flag lot behind our home into a commercial treatment facility for eating disorders at 2 Morris Lane.

Need for Mental Health Services

We are both trained as psychologists, and served on the faculty of Cornell University's Medical College (now named Weill Cornell Medical College). One of us (Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin) has treated patients, conducted research, and served on Cornell's faculty for over 32 years, where he is currently a Professor Emeritus. We both recognize and appreciate the need for effective mental health services, and have great compassion for individuals afflicted with eating disorders and other psychiatric problems. However, we have serious concerns about the proposed location of the new Monte Nido facility in Heathcote and its potential impact on our community.

Concerns about Location of Proposed Facility

Monte Nido is a for-profit company owned by a large private equity firm that has apparently found the treatment of anorexia to be extremely lucrative. Among their holdings are facilities in Malibu, Miami, Boston, and most recently, Irvington. And now they've set their sights on Scarsdale.

The proposed facility will house patients for short periods of time (30 to 60 days) from all over the country who have no connection to our community and who are unknown to us and our children. Given the transient nature of patients, the planned facility will be more like a hotel than the kind of stable long-term, group home envisioned under the Padavan law. While current plans are to house only 8 adolescents at 2 Morris Lane, under the law that number could grow to as many as 14. At night, the patients would be supervised by two to three staff. That means, we can expect 2 Morris

Lane to have anywhere from 10 to 18 people staying there at night. The situation during the day is even worse due to a full complement of professionals, support staff, and visitors.

According to Monte Nido website, "All our facilities have a large and varied staff," with roughly a 6 to 1 staff-to-patient ratio. This includes psychiatrists to handle all psychiatric issues, doctors to attend to medical issues, group therapists, eating disorder counselors, dietitians, nurses and nurse assistants, program coordinators, specialty practitioners, teachers, fitness trainers and yoga instructors, and support staff such as cooks, housekeeping, and maintenance workers.

Therefore, on any given day, we can expect anywhere from 48 to 84 people at 2 Morris Lane (assuming 8 to 14 patients and a 6 to 1 ratio of staff to patients). Even assuming numbers on the low end, *it's hard to imagine that this will not have an impact on traffic and parking, increase the use of Village services (police, fire, ambulance, sanitation), and substantially alter the character and nature of our quiet residential neighborhood.*

With respect to our own property, there is a utility easement on our property that was granted for a private residential home when the subdivision was originally created. We are concerned that the increased demands of a commercial facility that may routinely have 50 or more people a day may far exceed the capacity of the old sewage line running within that easement and under our property. *The easement and sewage line were not intended for commercial use.*

The proposed commercial treatment facility is not only inappropriate in this location, but it also raises serious questions about traffic and safety. As it stands now, traffic is often backed up at the intersection of Heathcote and Morris Lane so badly that we can barely get out of our driveway. And traffic on Heathcote Road will only get worse as development along Palmer Road continues. In addition to the middle school traffic with cars and buses, an urgent care facility, Balducci's, the Ambulance Corps, there will soon to be an apartment complex at the site of the old Heathcote Tavern with 33 parking spots.

The location of the proposed facility on Morris Lane will only further exacerbate an already problematic traffic situation on Heathcote Road. Any further additions will make Heathcote Road a virtual parking lot. At the very least, *a traffic study is needed before granting approval to Monte Nido.*

Lessons Learned from Irvington

Although Monte Nido is new to Scarsdale, it is not new to Westchester County. They already have an existing 11-acre treatment facility in Irvington. That facility should be more than adequate for its needs but, as a commercial enterprise owned by a private equity firm, they appear to be growth-oriented. However, an important difference between that facility and the one they propose to open in Scarsdale is that it is not in the middle of a residential neighborhood. Rather, it is hidden behind a wall, on a large tract of land, off a four-lane highway, and in a commercial/mixed use area in close proximity to a hospital, college, and office park. For that reason, there was little opposition to their application to locate a facility in Irvington.

However, shortly after that facility was in place, Monte Nido announced plans for a second facility, this time in the middle of a residential area. Our good neighbors in Irvington had many of the same concerns that we now have. That application met with stiff opposition from the community, and was eventually withdrawn.

We also understand from conversations with Irvington residents that Monte Nido is interested in opening a male facility. When we mentioned that we wanted to talk about Monte Nido's interest in opening a treatment facility in Scarsdale, we were immediately asked if that was the male facility that they want to open. So, this may just be the tip of the spear. Once Monte Nido has one facility, as in Irvington, they may seek to open a second one as well.

Rushed Process

One of the most disturbing aspects of the current situation with 2 Morris Lane is an exceedingly brief and hasty review process—a process that seems designed to avoid a full and open discussion of the many important issues at stake and to discourage meaningful community input. Many of us found out about Monte Nido's plan to establish a treatment center in our community less than two weeks ago. And only days after learning of this development, we were informed that there would be an informational meeting by Monte Nido at 3 pm on a Sunday afternoon, to be followed by a formal hearing on November 24th by the Village Planning and Land Use Committee. The date of the formal hearing is within days of Thanksgiving, during a week when many Scarsdale residents are either away or otherwise occupied with family matters. Yet, this is very similar to what happened in Irvington, apparently part of a calculated strategy to depress community attendance and force a favorable decision.

Instead, Monte Nido should provide the Village and its concerned residents with ample time to analyze the information contained in its proposal, discuss the impact of its plans through a series of meetings, obtain expert review and independent analysis of its proposal, and ensure that the Monte Nido proposal receives the careful and thorough review it deserves.

Avoid Hasty Decision, Require More Time and Information

In the absence of further information, the decision to put a for-profit treatment facility in a quiet Heathcote neighborhood seems ill-considered and wrong-headed. The location selected is also already "oversaturated" with neighboring facilities. The over-concentration in our community with these facilities is evident by the eight (8) facilities in the immediate surrounding area listed within Monte Nido's application, including another facility in the Heathcote community located approximately one (1) mile from 2 Morris Lane.

No doubt there must be a number of alternative sites that are both available and more suitable for the kind of treatment center Monte Nido is attempting to locate here in Scarsdale. A commercial or mixed-use neighborhood would be a far more appropriate choice. Therefore, if the Mayor and Village Board determine that it is in the community's best interest to have a commercial

treatment facility in Scarsdale, they should study the many available options and propose an appropriate alternative.

Conclusion and Recommended Action

Like our good neighbors in Irvington, we recognize and appreciate the need for facilities to treat adolescent psychiatric problems. But many of us have concerns about the appropriateness of locating a commercial treatment facility (with upwards of 50 patients, professionals, support staff, and visitors per day) in a quiet residential neighborhood. If such a treatment facility is to be located in Scarsdale, then a commercial or mixed use location makes more sense.

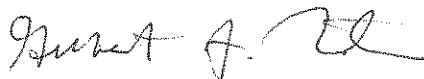
Before the Village makes a hasty decision that forever changes the character of our neighborhood, more time and information are needed to determine its impact on traffic and safety, as well as its burden on the community in terms of increased police, fire, ambulance, and sanitation services.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to consider our many valid concerns regarding the Monte Nido application, and take the time necessary to make a careful and well-informed decision.

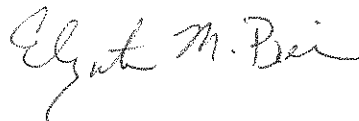
Specifically, we urge you to:

1. Request that Monte Nido voluntarily extend the 40-day review period;
2. Require Monti Nido to provide data on the community impact of its other facilities;
3. Order a study to assess the impact of the proposed 2 Morris Lane location on traffic, parking, and use of community services;
4. Assess the "saturation" of Scarsdale in general and 2 Morris Lane in particular with respect to existing group homes;
5. Identify, investigate, and propose alternate locations

Sincerely yours,



Gilbert J. Botvin, Ph.D.



Elizabeth M. Botvin, Ph.D.

cc: Village of Scarsdale Law Department
Village of Scarsdale Law and Land Use Committee