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MANAGER'S OFFICE

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The Honorable Jonathan Mark and
The Board of Trustees of the Village of Scarsdale
Scarsdale Village Hall
1001 Post Road
Scarsdale, NY 10583

BY HAND AND E-MAIL

November 23, 2015

Re: Proposed Group Home Treatment Facility at 2 Morris Lane

Dear Mayor Mark and Board Members:

We are the new owners of 30 Heathcote Road, a 1920s Tutor revival that sat on the market for well over a year before we purchased it. Having lived in Edgewood for over 15 years in an old house that we had restored over time, we were among a handful of buyers willing to take on the costly and protracted task of restoring and renovating one of our village's stately older homes, many of which, sadly, are being demolished in favor of larger, no hassle, new construction houses. Of course, our purchase was motivated by more than our love for old houses – our new property promised a large, private back yard for our active boys, ages 9 and 12.

No sooner did we finish renovations and unpack our last boxes, however, than did we learn that our back yard may soon adjoin a commercial group treatment facility at 2 Morris Lane. While we join our neighbors in opposing the introduction of this business into our residential neighborhood for all of the reasons set forth in the letter submitted by the group, we would like to raise a few more personal points.

First, as parents, we are unsettled by the idea of there being a revolving door of patients, workers, and in particular, a steady stream of visitors, any time of day or night,¹ all unknown to us, occupying the property that adjoins where our children play. As you know, it is quiet and “woody” here – a boon if one knows one's neighbors, but unnerving when there is, instead, a steady stream of strangers behind one's house. We feel vulnerable knowing that any number of people would be able to see and report when we are home, when we are on vacation, where our children are and where they play, and so on. The introduction of a group treatment facility, almost literally in our back yard, would certainly threaten our sense of safety and security.

Second, we are concerned that even a modicum of increased traffic, which the proposed facility surely will bring, will make the already untenable situation on Heathcote Road veer into being flat out dangerous. Our concerns about the traffic on Heathcote Road from Morris Lane to Kelwynne Road are nothing new. Earlier this year we wrote to the Traffic Safety Committee with concerns about the speed and volume of traffic on that stretch, particularly during morning drop off for the Middle School. We suggested the addition of a crossing guard and/or a crosswalk so that children could safely cross

¹ Visiting is unrestricted at Monte Nido. According to the company's web site for its Irvington facility: “You may have visitors during any free time when you are not scheduled to be in a meal or activity.”

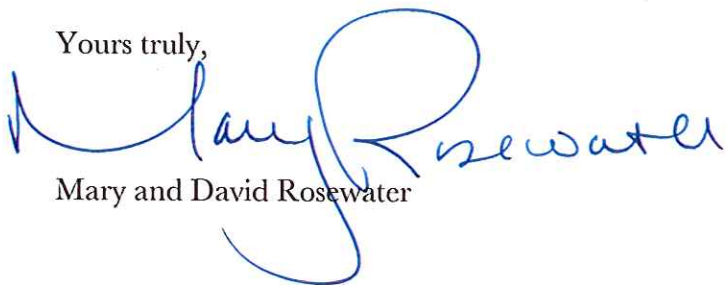
Heathcote Road to get to and from school; more prominent speed limit signage; and other reasonable measures. Unfortunately, all of our concerns were rejected, and no changes were instituted. (Our understanding is that other residents have complained about traffic safety on Morris Lane and near the corner of Birchall and Kelwynne, also to no avail.) As it stands, we often cannot get in or out of our driveway between 7:50 and 9:00 in the morning, and we have all but given up on allowing our son to walk the few blocks to the Middle School. Given that the Village has declined to address the already bad traffic situation in this area, the addition of a group home, and its attendant residents, staff, and visitors, can only make a bad situation worse.

Third, it is tragic but true that “a strong link between substance abuse and eating disorders in women has become apparent. Studies reveal that up to one-half of individuals with eating disorders abuse alcohol or illicit drugs compared with 9% of the general population.” (*SocialWorkToday.com*, citing National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2003.) Obviously, this is a serious and sympathetic population in need of assistance – we simply question the wisdom of allowing such a treatment facility to be located in such close proximity to Scarsdale Middle School and in a residential area. Further, one must assume that if 2 Morris Lane becomes a group treatment facility, it is unlikely ever to revert to being a private home. We therefore must ask: What happens if this particular population turns out to be unprofitable for Monte Nido, a hedge-fund owned, commercial organization? Who is to say what other types of patients this or any subsequent owner might seek to bring in? Will there be any restrictions on sales to other types of group home operators? Will the ratio of staff to patients, which undoubtedly adds to the safety of the facility, be maintained at a high level, or will the profit motive lead to staff reductions, an increased patient population, or both? Accordingly, we must look beyond the narrow issues presented by this particular proposal and consider the long term consequences for our neighborhood once a commercial facility becomes entrenched.

Finally, as recent buyers in a market segment that has essentially stagnated, we think it important that Scarsdale not be perceived as a place where residents’ property rights and/or enjoyment thereof are vulnerable or insecure. As noted by several experts during the recent “gravel” debate, the best conditions in which to determine real estate pricing and effect sales are when property rights (including quiet enjoyment) are robust, well-defined, and predictable. If, however, our community is perceived as a risky place to invest, we all will suffer – both in terms of individual home sales, and as a community due to an undermined tax base. To be sure, our taxes are extremely high; our schools, while the crowning jewel of our village, still must compete with private options not required to administer state testing; and our ability to renovate our aging housing stock is subject to complicated, multilayered oversight. To now introduce the wild card that a group home might pop up in a residential neighborhood would only be adding unneeded unpredictability to an already stressed and uncertain market.

We love this community. We have lived here for many years and have chosen Scarsdale as the place to raise our children and invest in our home. We hope that you will consider all of the reasons above, as well as the reasons presented by our neighbors, and take actions to block Monte Nido from operating a commercial treatment facility in our residential neighborhood.

Yours truly,



Mary and David Rosewater

