

071221 REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE - II

RE: Request for Assistance-Coram Civic Association



ReillyCD@coramcivic.org

To: Senator Anthony Palumbo; Senator Mario R. Mattera; Assembl. Steve Englebright; County Executive Steve Bellone; Legislator Robert Calarco; Legislator Sarah Anker; Legislator Kara Hahn; Stuart Cameron;
Inspector Patrick Reilly; Casey Berry; John Efstathiou; DA Timothy Sini; Sheriff Errol Toulon
Cc: Assembl. Joe DeStefano; Assembl. Jodi Giglio; Supervisor Edward Romaine; Councilman Michael Loguercio; Councilwoman Jane Bonner; rich.causin@dot.ny.gov; Meg Danielson; Kerriann Souto;
Kristin Mackay; Tywan Anthony; Howard Hafkin; Brendan Sweeney
Bcc: 'Gail Lynch-Bailey'; Scott Wood (swood74689@aol.com); 'E. James Freeman'; Bob Gluck; CDReilly; Erma Gluck; Frank Muraca; Jean Hartling; Kareem Nugdalla; Kathrine Soscia; Vana McClure;

Reply Reply All Forward ...

Mon 7/12/2021 6:00 AM

Greetings to all...*again*,

This is a follow-up letter to the one sent to your offices on June 14th by our **Coram Civic Association** which detailed the ongoing horrific conditions being suffered by the residents of Coram as well as many others in the greater Longwood Community. (*That email is included as a trailer to this email*). We would like to specifically thank **Assemblyman Joe DeStefano, Leg. Kara Hahn, and Town Supervisor Ed Romaine** for their timely and action-oriented responses.

While we are disappointed with the overall response to our initial communication, we feel it is likely that our request simply became lost in a probable ongoing tsunami of similar requests received by your offices. In order to hopefully differentiate our request from those others, we will attempt to personalize it with the hope of drawing your attention to it. Part of our initial request to you included a reference to a rape and strangulation that took place in the *early afternoon* of May 27th, a scant one hundred yards away from the deplorable Suffolk Transit bus stop next to our Home Depot in Coram. After we sent the June 14 letter to your offices, we had our monthly general membership meeting on June 28th (TOB Supervisor Ed Romaine happened to be the guest speaker that night) at which the mother of the 23-year old rape victim chose to offer her own plea to our community during our 'Residents Speak' portion of the meeting. In an effort to perhaps bring our request to a more personal and hopefully motivating level for you, the victim's mom has asked us and permitted us to share her heart wrenching words with you. Of course, I cannot include the tears, anguish, and outrage that carried this appeal to our ears, but here are her words...*please read them*.

A Plea from a Heartbroken and Angry Mother...

(Publicly presented during the 'Residents Speak' portion of the Coram Civic Association's June 28 General Meeting.

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"Good evening Supervisor Romaine, to the Community members of Coram and the fine officers of the 6th pct. I will not introduce myself by name, as to protect the identity of my daughter, but I stand before you tonight an angry, disgusted, heartbroken mother of a 23-year-old who is in the fight for her life against an addiction to heroin. That is not what makes me feel that way. What makes me feel this way is because on May 27th at approximately 1:30 pm, my daughter was brutally and savagely raped by a drunk deranged predator, who sat in wait in a lawn chair, as she walked along the footpath by Skips and Mill roads, going to the laundromat. This animal strangled my daughter, into an unconscious state, who is 5'2" and maybe 120 lbs. She came to, to this piece of trash raping her, then he threatened to kill her.

I spent that morning with my daughter. We went food shopping around the corner at Stop & Shop, driving by that disgusting bus stop, packed with people camping out in that shelter, with their Home Depot shopping carts filled with all sorts of crap, some of whose bodies were in that state of drug induced trip to being frozen in time. And I will venture to say, the drug dealers were pedaling their garbage as well. I told her I do not want to hear about any of the girls who are residents at Soulshine¹, to walk alone, ever, at any time of day or night. My daughter will live with the regret and the nightmares of this day for the rest of her life for not listening to me, as will her father and I."

[Editor's Note: Soulshine is a sober home located in Gordon Heights, a short walk from the Coram Plaza shopping center and the referenced Suffolk Transit bus stop. See footnote below.]

"I am longtime friends of the owner/operator of Soulshine, Dave Cino, and I will stand here and tell you that he does not do this for the money. He doesn't do it for the handouts from the state. He does it to give these young men and women a fighting chance to get back into society. To give themselves a second chance at a clean and sober life. I know for a fact that he has been begging for help to clean up the area, for someone to do something. And yet, every day, he goes by that bus stop, to see the same players doing the same thing. I also know that while my child was being raped, he was on a 'zoom call' about this very issue with some of you here in this room, all to fall on deaf ears.

Are you all aware that the crime and violation of loitering, smoking marijuana, and open alcoholic containers has been decriminalized? Making it OKAY for this bus stop to be used as an encampment for the homeless, the mentally unstable and the drug dealers?? It is very easy to point the finger at the police and yell "do something", but how can they clean up this mess with their hands tied and living in a state of anxiety that some clown somewhere will whip out their phone and make false allegations of police brutality and abuse of civil rights for doing the very job they signed up for?? You may say that the police need to earn the respect of the public. I am here to tell you that trust is a two-way street my friends. And we are in a state of lawlessness, the criminals have no fear, thanks to bail reform and our wonderful governor. Every single day, the amount of officers that don't make it home to their families at the hands of savage animals who kill them just because they do a job that most people wouldn't dare do, is heartbreaking. Yet the public will Monday morning quarterback from behind their phones and computer screens. And just an FYI, the Lucky 7 Smoke Shop on 112 around the corner from the crime scene refused to give video to the police without a warrant. That speaks volumes right there.

It is your job as representatives of your community to work WITH the police and fix this mess. Did I mention that I'm also a newly retired NYPD officer, after 26 years, 16 of them as a sergeant?? I have witnessed things that are burned in my brain forever. I have missed holidays, birthdays, funerals, you name it, because of a job I took at 22 years old and loved. Our police officers NEED YOU SUPPORT AND YOUR HELP. This is a county bus route. I have sat and watched legitimate riders have to stand 100 yards away in the rain for the bus to avoid the harassment, sexual harassment, drug pushing and filth that is in the bus shelter. Where are the rights of these people? Where are the rights of the residents of Coram walking? WHERE ARE THE RIGHTS OF MY DAUGHTER WHO CAN NO LONGER WALK AROUND THE CORNER IN BROAD DAYLIGHT BECAUSE SHE WAS BRUTALLY RAPED???

Please raise your hand if you have a daughter, granddaughter, niece?? Even if you have sons, I will ask you to allow them to walk past that bus stop alone any time of day. I can guarantee YOU wouldn't even do so yourself. These are not homeless people "who have rights too". They choose to live this way, many who are mentally unstable. Come out of your nice offices, your nice homes, and use some damn county resources and get them the help they need, or take them home with you. It's all "oh that's too bad" until it happens to your loved one and you can try to live with that. It's not easy. Trust me.

I will take a moment to thank the 6th Precinct for their dedication and tireless work until this predator was captured. I have responded to many rapes while on the job, and they are awful. But it's never as awful to see your own child through the window of Stonybrook ER in a wheelchair, sobbing, covered in dirt and leaves, and spending 9 hours there listening to her have to relive the horror over and over again, and hold her hand finally after they scraped under her fingernails for DNA as she is crying in pain while the rape kit is being completed.

'IT IS YOUR DUTY TO FIX THIS AND I WILL STOP AT NOTHING UNTIL ITS DONE.'

Thank you for your time. God bless." – *Mother of the Rape Victim*

1 - *Soulshine America, a NYS not-for-profit corporation, is a group of recovery-based 'sober homes' that provide structured living for individuals who struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, to transition from treatment. Soulshine's houses are structured through rules and regulations to instill necessary life skills to support self-sufficiency for each resident. Residents*

are required to attend outpatient programs during the day. Soulshine monitors each resident's outpatient attendance, performance, toxicology, and behavior in these programs. It is also required that all residents attend self-help fellowship meetings, once a day Monday through Sunday. It is Soulshine's goal to help residents grow and build a solid foundation; the houses are carefully constructed so they have the time and opportunity to do so.

(Coram Civic continues...)

Ladies and gentlemen, to the best of the public's knowledge, you are in the elected and/or appointed positions that are responsible to fix this problem that has been allowed to become systemic here in Suffolk County. Whether you call these folks "the homeless" or "vagrants" or "lost souls" is irrelevant to solving this growing issue. And homelessness is not simply a 'housing problem'. It is a human problem. It is fueled primarily by addiction and mental illness. That said, we cannot continue to hide behind waiting for addiction and mental illness to be 'solved' before clearing out these folks from our shopping centers and other public areas. These particular supposed 'homeless' include drug dealers, drug users, prostitutes, panhandlers, thieves, and vandals that make rational decisions on where they choose to congregate based on two primary criteria: 1. They look for the environment that is the most physically inviting (*That's something the landlords, tenants, and the community must work on along with our local government*), and, most importantly, 2. The 'homeless' congregate where the policies are the most permissive (*That's what the County and State must work on...and that would be those of you folks in our State and County legislatures*). If we continue to do nothing beyond the futile 'please and thank you' actions that have been taken to date, more storefronts will become empty, shopping centers will be closed, and crime will continue to escalate. The resulting lost jobs and plummeting home values will then lead to an exodus from our communities...and only another depressed hamlet will remain...populated solely by those who could not afford to leave.

Please contact either Erma Gluck, civic president and/or Chris Reilly, civic vice president with your response to our question. At this stage, our Coram residents are asking for your current plans that directly address this issue and/or just a simple commitment to work with our Coram Civic toward developing such plans. Then we can all, in unison, plan and implement an effective actual resolution for the residents and business owners of Coram and our greater Longwood Community.

I'm sure that everyone has been working hard. Now let us all start working smart. Please advise of your thoughts and intents. Talk with us. Together, we can do this. We have to.

Respectfully yours,

Chris Reilly

Vice President

Coram Civic Association

631-681-9890

ReillyCD@CoramCivic.org

CDReilly@optonline.net

www.CoramCivic.org

&

The Coram Civic Association Board of Directors

Erma Gluck – President (egbgcats@optonline.net; 631-748-6920)

Chris Reilly – Vice President (ReillyCD@CoramCivic.org; 631-681-9890)

Robert Gluck – Director

Jean Hartling – Director

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Original Email of 6/14/21

From: ReillyCD@coramcivic.org <ReillyCD@coramcivic.org>

Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 11:55 AM

To: Senator Anthony Palumbo <palumbo@nysenate.gov>; Senator Mario R. Mattera <mattera@nysenate.gov>; Assembl. Steve Englebright <engles@assembly.state.ny.us>; County Executive Steve Bellone <county.executive@suffolkcountyny.gov>; Legislator Robert Calarco <robert.calarco@suffolkcountyny.gov>; Legislator Sarah Anker <sarah.anker@suffolkcountyny.gov>; Legislator Kara Hahn <kara.hahn@suffolkcountyny.gov>; Stuart Cameron <SCPDINFO@SuffolkCountyNY.gov>; Inspector Patrick Reilly <patrick.reilly@suffolkcountyny.gov>; Casey Berry <Casey.Hines@suffolkcountyny.gov>; John Efstathiou <john.efstathiou@suffolkcountyny.gov>; DA Timothy Sini <INFODA@SuffolkCountyNY.gov>; Sheriff Errol Toulon <Suffolk_Sheriff@SuffolkCountyNY.gov>

Cc: Assembl. Joe DeStefano <destefanoj@nyassembly.gov>; Assembl. Jodi Giglio <giglioJ2@nyassembly.gov>; Supervisor Edward Romaine <eromaine@brookhaven.org>; Councilman Michael Loguercio <CouncilmanLoguercio@Brookhaven.org>; Councilwoman Jane Bonner <JBonner@brookhaven.org>; rich.causin@dot.ny.gov; Meg Danielson <meg.danielson@dot.ny.gov>; Kerriann Souto <Kerriann.Souto@SuffolkCountyNY.gov>; Kristin Mackay <Kristin.Mackay@SuffolkCountyNY.gov>; 'Tywan Anthony' <Anthony@rpai.com>; Howard Hafkin <HOWARD_HAFKIN@homedepot.com>; Brendan Sweeney <bsweeney@brookhavenny.gov>

Subject: Request for Assistance-Coram Civic Association

Importance: High

Greetings all,

The Coram Civic Association is seeking your assistance in solving a long-term problem that continues to grow exponentially in our community. This problem has created financial obstacles for our commercial areas as well as increased personal safety issues and quality of life concerns for the residents of our hamlet of Coram and all the residents of our greater Longwood Community. This problem is vagrancy. Vagrancy has recently exploded, once again, into the forefronts of the minds of Coram residents with the forcible rape and strangulation of a woman on Thursday, May 27th in a wooded area off of Skips Road between Mill Road and Route 112 in Coram at 1:27 PM, *the middle of the afternoon!* That location is right across the street from the Suffolk County Transit bus stop (4-line transfer stop) located adjacent to the Home Depot in the Coram Plaza Shopping Center, a location long-known as a mass gathering spot for vagrants including drug dealers, drug users and prostitutes who hang out there all day long.

Vagrancy has been proliferating at an alarming rate for many years and, left unattended, seems to feed upon itself. Vagrancy exists in our community in many forms such as panhandlers, prostitutes, drug users, drug dealers, gang members, and the "long term unemployed." The results are the loss of potential customers who are fearful of shopping in these areas, tenants and landlords hesitant to invest any more of their time and money in building their businesses and beautifying these centers (with many relocating their business to a more inviting hamlet), and new businesses reluctant to consider opening in our growing number of vacant storefronts. We have been intermittently addressing these issues with our town, county, and state representatives along with our SCPD and have had periodic, short term, positive outcomes; however, emphasis is on the phrase "short term" ...and even those have been offset by the increasing growth of vagrants in our community.

Our commercial areas, specifically, the commercial four corners in Coram formed at the intersection at Middle Country Road and Fife Drive/Westfield Road (Coram Commons S/C, Coram East S/C, 7-Eleven, Tiano's Café), the Plaza 99 Shopping Center at 99 Middle Country Road at the corner of Martin St. just west of Fife Drive, as well as the Coram Plaza/Home Depot Shopping Center at the southeast corner of the Rtes. 112 & 25 intersection in Coram, have all been severely impacted by the ever-increasing presence of vagrants. These closely positioned commercial sections form the primary shopping district for Coram as well as, arguably, that of Middle Island, Gordon Heights, and Ridge. We, as the Coram Civic Association, have surveyed and met with

the various tenants and landlords along with the concerned residents of these areas and the primary lament of all is the negative impact of the vagrants on their quality of life and the health of their businesses. Our shopping center vacancy rates in these areas range from a “low” of 37.5% to an alarmingly high of 77.8%...and those are pre-pandemic figures!

While we can all debate long, hard -- *and seemingly endlessly* -- on the causes of the vagrancy problem we face, our members and most all of the residents of Coram just want vagrancy dealt with and removed from our commercial centers. In resolving this issue, we are *not* looking to first solve the issue of homelessness, or unemployment, or single parent households, or drug rehabilitation, or any other “contributing” factors. What we feel is needed first is legislation back on the books regarding loitering and vagrancy. Shop owners need the legal right to insist that the loiterers, panhandlers, drug dealers, drug users, prostitutes and other vagrants must not congregate by their storefronts or in the shopping centers...and police need the legal authority to move these vagrants away from the commercial areas...and not through the tedious and onerous “Affidavit of Trespass” process. This affidavit process has served more as a diversion from addressing the problem than as a solution to the problem. Store owners and shoppers need an *immediate* result, not a costly, drawn out, legal process.

We recently presented this community issue to SC District Attorney Tim Sini at our monthly membership meeting, and he pledged his support in addressing this issue. We have worked closely over the past six years with SC Legislator Sarah Anker and TOB Supervisor Ed Romaine. We are extremely thankful for the accomplishments that we have had together; however, we must now collectively address this proverbial “elephant in the room” – vagrancy – head on, or our commercial and residential deterioration will accelerate beyond the current critical levels. We, along with our membership, feel strongly that Coram deserves the same attention and investment as our north shore neighbors such as Stony Brook, Port Jefferson, Miller Place and Shoreham. ***Will you join with the residents of Coram in solving this vagrancy blight?*** Together – residents and elected officials -- we can work toward curing this corrosive attack on our commercial centers and the quality of life of our residents.

Please contact either Erma Gluck, civic president and/or Chris Reilly, civic vice president with your response to our question. At this stage, our Coram residents are asking for your current plans that directly address this issue and/or just a simple commitment to work with our Coram Civic toward developing such plans. Then we can all, *in unison*, plan and implement an effective actual resolution for the residents and business owners of Coram and our greater Longwood Community.

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