

CONTACT: Mike Deery
516-812-3310

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HEMPSTEAD TOWN TAKES MAJOR STEP TOWARD CLOSING COURTESY HOTEL – ADOPTS CONDEMNATION MAP

Hempstead Town Supervisor Kate Murray, Councilmen James Darcy and Edward Ambrosino and Councilwoman Dorothy Goosby today announced a major step in the town's efforts to shut down the Courtesy Hotel in West Hempstead. Also present at a press conference in front of the Courtesy Hotel were Town Clerk Mark Bonilla, Receiver of Taxes Don Clavin, County Legislator Vincent Muscarella, West Hempstead Civic Association President Rosalie Norton, Chamber of Commerce President Greg Yuknek and local residents. At a Town Board meeting on the evening of September 6th, Murray will propose the adoption of a "condemnation map." The map will identify the specific parcel which will be the subject of condemnation proceedings, and the document is a required element in a court action to seize the hotel.

"I am working hard with my colleagues on the Town Board to make sure that the Courtesy Hotel 'checks out' and ends its 'reign of terror' in West Hempstead," said Murray. "I have consulted with the Town Attorney. Once the Town Board approves a condemnation map, his office will be proceeding aggressively with the town's action to take the hotel under eminent domain provisions."

The town is utilizing a June 23rd U.S. Supreme Court decision to shutter the tattered hotel. The Supreme Court decision gave greater rights to local governments to condemn properties for private redevelopment. "Revitalizing neighborhoods constitutes grounds upon which local governments can seize properties and effect private development," said Murray. "Now that the town has prepared a condemnation map, the town attorney's office can commence a court action against the Courtesy Hotel," added Ambrosino.

Town officials pointed out that conditions at the site, along with criminal arrests that have occurred at the location, have presented a blight on the community. "A drug arrest has occurred at the Courtesy Hotel just this past week," said Goosby. "Area residents shouldn't have to tolerate this bad neighbor in West Hempstead," added Darcy.

Murray also disclosed that a significant benefit of seizing the hotel and having it redeveloped by the private sector is that it will not add to the local tax burden. Rather, a new developer would support the local tax base. This differs from a government condemnation under which the property would be utilized for a public use (i.e., park, municipal offices). A governmental use of the property would increase the tax burden of West Hempstead businesses and homeowners.

"Shutting down this hotel and turning it over to the private sector for redevelopment is in the best interests of everyone in West Hempstead," stated the Supervisor. "Our plan will force this bad neighbor to 'pack its bags' without adding to the local property tax burden."

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While the adoption of the condemnation map will be a major step in the town's condemnation efforts against the Courtesy Hotel, Murray explained that Hempstead Town has taken several other steps to close the building during her tenure. Specifically, the town has been aggressively working to close the Courtesy Hotel under provisions of its public nuisance law. The local ordinance provides for closing properties where multiple criminal arrests for activities such as prostitution and drug-related activities have occurred. In fact, the town's "public nuisance" case against the Courtesy was certified for trial in May of this year and a court date has been set for September 15th. In the spring of 2004, the town sought a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction against the hotel's owner. The judge in the case denied those motions, which would have immediately closed the hotel. "We are serious about this case and are moving forward to stop this threat to local quality of life," said Darcy. "We will use all means at our disposal to close the Courtesy Hotel," added Goosby.

Beyond efforts under the public nuisance law and the condemnation case, Murray and Ambrosino are working to create a stronger police presence at the Courtesy Hotel. The town officials are working with State Senator Dean Skelos and the Nassau County Police Department to locate a police booth immediately adjacent to the hotel. "An enhanced police presence at this site would be effective and welcomed by the community," said Ambrosino. "This is just one more approach we are using to attack the dangerous and unpleasant activities that have been occurring at the Courtesy."

"Ironically, disrespect and courtesy are two terms that go hand in hand when it comes to the Courtesy Hotel," concluded Murray. "When the town board adopts a condemnation map for this hotel, we can commence our court action and make sure that the Courtesy takes a 'permanent vacation'."

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