

Continue to Save the V.A. Rally
(October 22nd, 2013)

Comments from Supervisor Linda Puglisi

1. Welcome to our rally to continue to save our F.D.R. V.A. in the hamlet of Montrose/Town of Cortlandt; Linda Puglisi.
2. Remarks by LP at Save the V.A. Rally
Our Veterans have and are fighting for us and our families and for our Country and now we have to fight for them.

HISTORY

The Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) expired on December 31st, 2011. Therefore, we thought we had won the fight to downsize our VA's 172 acres of land and many of the 20 buildings to a private developer NOT solely for our Veterans that Washington (Department of Veteran Affairs) wanted to do.

We were very pleased but said we would remain vigilant and continue to monitor the Department of Veteran's Affairs in Washington about their plans with this V.A. – our V.A.

That pledge led us to today's rally. Willy Nazario (chairman of our Veterans Committee) and I learned only this September that the Department of Veteran's Affairs plans to demolish 5 of the 20 existing buildings (25% in total in 2014). There was no official notification to our Veterans, only rumors that were substantiated once Willy, Neil Grose and I made calls to V.A. Officials. [Historic preservation is also important. There are petitions here today to sign. It dates back to 1950.]

We believe this is a back door way to dismantle our V.A. – 25% of the buildings. What happens if the next year there are 5 more buildings torn down and then the next year another 5? Pretty soon you are left with bare bone structures and guess what? Then they go back to their original plan – an EUL to lease off this pristine land on the Hudson River to developers for housing, NOT solely for

Veterans. By the way, “not solely for Veterans” were their words printed in the EUL. It’s disgraceful! Don’t balance the V.A.’s budget in Washington on the backs of our Veterans. They deserve the services at this V.A., not miles away.

The Veterans fought for us and now we must continue to fight for them! They could remodel these buildings into a center for education, a school to learn new skills, trades and professions for our returning and current Veterans. They could take the millions of dollars to dismantle the buildings and remodel them into a hub, for useful Veteran purposes, for jobs! More Women Veteran’s Services are needed. A train station is nearby – across the street for easy access for our Veterans transportation and for those who work here.

We also do not want to lose jobs at our V.A. This V.A. could become a center for rehabilitation, where family members can stay and reside close to their loved ones while they rehabilitate. Turn them into houses such as the Fisher Company did in San Antonio and elsewhere in the Country – called “Fisher Homes”. I ask why not? Do not destroy the buildings, use them – for Veterans purposes! Also, open the pool and the gym – the projected date of 2017 is not acceptable. This building has been closed for over a decade. Our Veterans need these services for physical therapy.

“REVITALIZE THE V.A.
DO NOT DESTROY AND DISMANTLE OUR VA!!”

Thank you and thank you to our Veterans and to the men and women protecting us today throughout the world.

Linda Puglisi
Supervisor
Town of Cortlandt