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REMARKS OF BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT **RUBEN DIAZ JR.**

*AT THE MULLER LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING TO SOLICIT COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT FINAL REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AND HOMELESS ASSISTANCE SUBMISSION
JUNE 22, 2011*

The future reuse of the Muller Army Reserve Center (Muller) has been hotly debated in the Bronx for years. When the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment brought Muller to our attention in 2007, the mayor and my office agreed that the National Guard would move into the facility. The consensus to move the National Guard Units to Muller was to facilitate the construction of two schools at buildings adjacent to the Kingsbridge Armory. In the fall of 2009 this consensus was lost when the mayor's representatives on the Muller LRA insisted on transforming the facility into a 200-bed homeless facility.

I want to make it unequivocally clear that my position is not about opposing the needs of the homeless, whom I support. Rather, it's the appropriateness of using Muller for this purpose in light of the number of other homeless facilities being developed nearby. In addition, the reuse of the building by the National Guard will require minimal expense and have little if any impact on the immediate neighborhood. Finally, the socioeconomic benefit of constructing two sorely needed new schools can't be overlooked.

We in the Bronx are not averse to accepting our fair share of responsibility for housing the homeless. The vast majority of the city's homeless, 75 percent, are families, and we provide housing for up to 40 percent of homeless family entrants. We also provide referrals to the various permanent housing developments as well as serving as the home to the only family intake center in the City – known as the Path Center.

On October 28, 2010, the Bronx Borough Board--comprised of representatives of the Bronx City Council delegation and the chairpersons of each community board--adopted a statement in support of housing the National Guard units from the Kingsbridge Armory Annex at Muller to facilitate school development at the old armory site.

I remain perplexed how the mayor's representatives on the LRA could overlook the value of housing National Guard units at Muller and constructing new schools in Kingsbridge Heights. The Mayor's position that federal law requires that the facility be used exclusively for homeless services is just not true.

Federal law and regulations plainly require the LRA to consider community and economic development needs such as use of the Muller Center by the National Guard. The law and regulations also require the LRA to seriously consider the Notice of Interest in the Muller Center that was filed by the National Guard. The failure of the mayor's representatives to consider the National Guard's Notice of Interest in using the Muller Center is contrary to the spirit and the letter of federal laws and regulations governing the reuse of Army bases such as Muller.

I want to thank the Muller LRA for hosting this hearing and look forward to hearing what my constituents have to say about the reuse of the Muller Army Reserve Center.