

# JCC unveils proposal for new 75,000-square-foot facility

By Colleen Michele Jones

Flanked by a throng of regional politicians backing the organization's preliminary proposal, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) on the Hudson announced plans Wednesday for a major expansion of its Tarrytown facility.

The JCC — which serves more than 3,000 people, including many from the Rivertowns — hopes to adjoin its existing site at 371 South Broadway with the former General Motors (GM) Training Center. The community center purchased the adjacent property in 2009 for \$3.3 million.

The project, if approved by the Village of Tarrytown, would more than quadruple the JCC's current space of 17,000 square feet to 75,000 square feet. Plans call for renovating the existing center and retaining a portion of the old GM facility while adding a significant amount of new construction, which would boost the campus to 6.6 acres.

JCC Executive Director Frank Hassid said the expansion would allow the community center to better serve its growing membership by offering more programs, services, and amenities open to residents of all faiths, including a new fitness center, two swimming pools, expanded nursery school, day care, teen center, auditorium, café, and meeting rooms.

While Hassid acknowledged that no formal application had been submitted yet, a number of local leaders had pledged their initial support of the project and their help in securing grant funding to offset its price tag of \$12 million in construction costs alone.

Among those in attendance at Wednesday's press conference on the grounds of the JCC were New York State Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, New York State Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, Westchester County Legislator Thomas Abinanti, Greenburgh Town



JIM MACLEAN/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Architect Peter Gisolfi and JCC Executive Director Frank Hassid speak during a press conference on Oct. 20.

Supervisor Paul Feiner, and Deputy County Executive Kevin Plunkett.

"I think everybody recognizes that the programs the JCC will offer will only make the quality of life in the area better," Hassid told the Enterprise last Friday, preceding the official announcement.

"We think we can really be an anchor for the community," he added.

According to Hassid, the JCC has experienced tremendous growth in its 80-year history, and even as the center settled into its new home on South Broadway in 1995, JCC administrators were already eyeing the building next door, which GM moved out of in 2008.

"Literally, within six months after moving in here we felt like we'd outgrown it," Hassid said.

Before opening its doors in Tarrytown, the JCC, founded in Yonkers in 1929, operated out of a number of satellite locations, including area synagogues, churches, and even storefronts in Dobbs Ferry and Ardsley in the 1980s.

"We were a JCC without walls," said Hassid.

According to Peter Gisolfi, whose Hastings architectural firm has been hired to oversee the project, the new campus will be designed as a collection of buildings arranged around a central courtyard.

The existing JCC site will be modernized to house the facility's child-care center, which includes day care, preschool, summer camp, and an after-school program in cooperation with the Tarrytown and Irvington school districts, in addition to a special needs program.

That building will be adjoined by a covered walkway to the 42,500-square-foot GM site, of which 11,000 square feet will be demolished, the remaining space renovated, and 25,000 square feet added to create a recreational center with a large gymnasium with fitness center. The project also entails the construction of two swimming pools

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

010

## JCC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

(one reserved for swimming lessons); an auditorium for workshops and lectures; a music school; a café; teen lounge; meeting rooms for adult education programs, and an outdoor area that could be used for additional parking and recreational space.

Hassid said he expected the JCC would submit a site plan application to the Village of Tarrytown "very shortly," but that preliminary discussions with village officials had gone well.

When contacted earlier this week, Tarrytown Mayor Drew Fixell submitted this comment to the Enterprise by e-mail: "I'm extremely pleased that the JCC has chosen to invest in Tarrytown and expand its facility here. The project promises not only to better serve JCC members, but also to offer enormous benefits to the broader community, both in the form of enhanced programs and services and by providing a short- and long-term boost to the local economy. Projects such as this add greatly to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the entire village. And while it will have to undergo the normal review process, I'm confident that the JCC, which has always been an outstanding member of our community, will approach this undertaking with the same sensitivity and sense of responsibility that has always been its hallmark."

The JCC sees its expansion plan as an opportunity to broaden its place in the community. Hassid estimated about 35 percent of its current enrollment in its non-denominational programs are people of different faiths, and its preschool, which accommodates 110 children, is very popular with Rivertowns parents.

Hassid said the JCC had been setting plans for the project in motion over the past few years, and had already received an initial

grant from the New York State Dormitory Authority with the help of Stewart-Cousins. He said administrators were working with Brodsky's office on a grant for construction of a senior center.

The JCC plans to finance the bulk of the expansion through tax-exempt bonds as well as community donations. Hassid said the center was about halfway to its fundraising campaign goal of \$7 million.

Amy Martini, an Irvington resident who is on the fundraising committee, said she was confident the JCC would reach that goal, even in a difficult economy.

Martini and her husband, Ron Cohen, who have two young daughters, have been members of the JCC since they moved to Irvington 10 years ago.

"Both my kids went to preschool here, summer camp, they do karate and gymnastics, and my husband and I go to the fitness center," said Martini. "And I want to know it [the JCC] will be here for another 10 years, and into the future."

Martini said she especially looked forward to the creation of a safe, fun place where her girls, once they were in their teens, could go meet friends.

"It's going to be a real community hub," said Martini.

Hassid was optimistic that if the project received the required approvals as soon as the spring of 2011, it could begin building then. Construction is expected to last about 15 months, during which time the JCC hopes to remain open. Hassid hoped the facility might be completed by sometime in 2012, and that besides increasing Tarrytown's tax base the project would create hundreds of new jobs in the areas of construction, clerical, maintenance, and teaching positions/directorships.

Hassid anticipated the plan would be welcome news to residents of the quad villages.

"This will be the area's most prestigious new facility. It will be a meeting place not only for the Jewish community, but for all Rivertowns residents and beyond," said Hassid.