



The Community Food Council Inc. will move to north garage of Huntington LIRR station.

HUNTINGTON

Town approves food pantry move

Votes to relocate it to LIRR station in order to apply for grant

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Visitors to a food pantry may have to travel farther after the Huntington Town Board unanimously approved its relocation last week.

The Community Food Council Inc. will be moving to a room in the north garage of the Huntington Long Island Rail Road station from its East 5th Street location in Manor Field Park.

No date has been set for the move, officials said.

The town board on Feb. 6 voted 5-0 to approve the move, which has been in the works for years.

Town spokeswoman Christine Geed said the town needs to submit paperwork to recoup the money it has already spent to build the Manor Field Spray Park in Huntington Station, which opened in 2022. The town plans to apply for \$189,000 through the New York State and Municipal Facilities Program Capital Funding.

The grant requires that the property be used only as a park, Geed said. The pantry was supposed to move in 2021 to the John J. Flanagan Center on Park Avenue, but the council resisted, saying a quarter of its constituents walk to the pantry and the Flanagan Center was out of the way.

"We weren't going to ask them to move until we found an appropriate location," Geed said, adding the town provided the space free of charge as a community service.

The town used money from several operating accounts to complete the spray park.

Steven Jarmon, co-president of the food council, said while the new loca-

tion is about a mile away from the current spot, he does have some concerns about patrons having to use a pedestrian overpass to get over the railroad tracks.

"All we want is a place that is convenient for our clients and recipients to get their goods," he said. "We will try to make it work."

The pantry operates for two hours on Wednesdays and Fridays and provides bags of food for families of four. In 2023, it served 9,300 households, which benefited 46,365 people, Jarmon said.

Pierre Vertin, who picked up a bag of food on Wednesday, said he doesn't mind if the pantry is relocated but thinks the railroad station is not a good idea.

"It's very crowded with cars," he said. "There's a lot of congestion in that area that may make it hard, maybe dangerous, for people to go there."

Laurencia Melo said she uses the council food pantry on occasion and can either walk or drive her car.

"When it's warm I don't mind to walk," she said. "If they move it, I will have to drive, which isn't always convenient, but what can I do?"

Paule Pachter, CEO of Long Island Cares, The Harry Chapin Regional Food Bank, which works with the food council and operates a separate food pantry in Huntington Station, said the demand for food on Long Island continues to rise, making food pantries essential.

He said in 2023 the Long Island Cares-operated food pantry in Huntington Station served 18,568 people, or 168,000 meals. In January, it served 2,017 people, or about 18,177 meals.

"We're seeing that kind of increase in visitors and meals served for at least the last three years," Pachter said.

"People who are migrating from other countries, people who are unemployed, people who are under employed, those who can't qualify for food stamps, all those groups are suffering and winding up in pantries and soup kitchens," Pachter said.



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