

*executive committee of
the directing council*



PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
the regional committee*

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



113th Meeting
Washington, D.C.
27 June-1 July 1994

Provisional Agenda Item 5.4

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NEW PAHO HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

At the 112th Meeting of the Executive Committee, in September 1993, the Three-Country Working Party on the new Headquarters Building reported its reconfirmation that the proposed site at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Jones Bridge Road in Chevy Chase, Maryland, was the most appropriate for a new Headquarters building (Document CE112/2).

The Secretariat reported that a group of neighborhood associations and individuals opposed to locating PAHO's Headquarters at the Chevy Chase site brought a lawsuit against Montgomery County, the Maryland National Parks and Planning Commission, the Chevy Chase Land Company, and PAHO. In late November 1993 the Montgomery County Council, by a 6 to 3 vote, amended the County Zoning Code in such a way as to declare international organizations and chanceries (embassy office buildings) to be commercial. The practical effect of this legislation was to prohibit PAHO from locating on the Chevy Chase site and subject it, and other international organizations, to a variety of development taxes and zoning restrictions. Shortly after passage of this legislation, the legal case of the neighborhood associations against PAHO and Montgomery County was dismissed.

The Organization then filed suit in Federal Court against Montgomery County, alleging among other things a violation of United States law governing foreign relations. On 3 March 1994 a hearing was held in Federal District Court in Baltimore, Maryland. Subsequently, the judge decided in favor of Montgomery County. The case is currently on appeal by the Organization to the Fourth Circuit Court in Richmond, Virginia, with a decision expected sometime in July or August 1994.

If the Organization is not successful in overcoming the change in the Montgomery County Zoning Code, it is likely that being classified as commercial will make locating in Maryland impractical. Together with the high cost of appropriate sites in the District of Columbia, a loss of the legal appeal would raise significant doubts as to the feasibility of obtaining a new site under prevailing local conditions.