

# Group home opposition continues

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house physically and mentally impaired residents.

Those involved with the Grayling issue have met twice already, and a third meeting is scheduled tonight between select residents, city and state officials, and representatives from Renaissance House at Farmington Hills City Hall.

City Attorney Paul Bibeau said that in November 1985, the Michigan Supreme Court upheld the state's right to place mentally and emotionally disturbed people from state mental health facilities into communities.

"THAT'S A policy of the state of Michigan — the whole issue has been tried in the courts," he said. "Local units cannot interfere as long as they (the proponents) are not violating some of the codes."

"If you have facts . . . regarding an applicant's good moral character, give us the facts," Bibeau added. "We have to file a complaint with specific allegations. Get them to us."

Bibeau was directed by city officials to meet with Pilkington to determine if neighbors' facts were substantial enough to warrant a complaint.

"The remedies are provided for in the Act," he said. "We can file complaints, and we will, given the facts." Municipalities and individuals can file complaints with the state under the provisions of Section 23 and 24 of the Act 218 of 1979, the Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act.

BOTH FARMINGTON HILLS and Pilkington filed written complaints — the city's dated Oct. 16 and 22. Two responses were sent from the Michigan Department of Social Services to the city, dated Nov. 25 and 26, with one sent by registered mail, detailing the state's position that "there is no basis in the city's complaint on which to deny license issuance at this time."

Pilkington is still awaiting a response to his complaint, he said.

The city of Farmington Hills went on record opposing the neighborhood placement concept when the decision was made to mainstream residents from mental health facilities into the community, City Manager William Costick said.

"We made a formal request . . . that they place all such facilities on our major roads, not on a street like Grayling," he said. "We were outright denied on that request."

COSTICK SAID the issue does not appear to be one of building code violations, but of the "good, moral character" of the applicants or employees.

"They're going to bring the building up to code — I don't think that's the issue," he said. "The question is whether they put the facility there (on Grayling)."

All permits for structural, plumbing and electrical were issued for the Grayling building. Structural and plumbing work has also been inspected and approved, Costick added.

The possibility that people with criminal records may be placed in the proposed group home has upset Grayling Street residents, who said they have not received acceptable answers to their complaints.

Their concerns were detailed in one of the city's complaint letters to James Quigley, director of the Division of Adult Foster Care for the Michigan Department of Social Services.

THESE CONCERNS include:

- the character of the regional group home occupants, definitions of treatment, and guarantees from the state about mental stability of the residents,
- the nature of resident illness, specifically relating to criminal aspects,
- details of recruitment, training and overseeing of employees,
- policy for monitoring of the group home's operation,
- who owns the proposed group home, which the state has told Grayling Street residents is confidential information,
- full information about alleged violations of operations at other Renaissance House facilities,
- policy regarding the involvement of the local police department if a complaint of criminal activity or criminal sexual conduct is lodged against a resident or staff person, and,
- how many complaints against a

licensee must be received before a license will not be issued.

Several of these areas, including the issue of criminal sexual conduct, were addressed in the state response to the city.

"It is possible a person who will occupy a small group home will have a criminal record, perhaps for criminal sexual conduct," Quigley said in his most recent, 10-page letter. "Not all criminal sexual conduct indicates rape, not is it necessary for physical contact to be made to indicate a sexual offense to some degree."

QUIGLEY SAID such group home placements are "viewed very carefully." The state looks at the "nature of the offense, how long ago it occurred, the actions and stability of the client since that time and the likelihood of any similar act ever recurring."

Neighbors' complaints revolve around allegations of one male staff

member at the Renaissance House's Ypsilanti facility accused earlier this year of having sexual relations with a patient, using drugs with the resident, and leaving residents unsupervised during his evening shift.

Although the man was released from his position, according to information from the DSS, officials "could find no corroborating evidence to support the allegation made."

These issues will most likely make up the agenda of tonight's meeting, officials said.

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