

Hills site to do assessments for only 1 year: state

By Noreen Flack Staff writer

State Department of Social Services officials said the new assessment program contract at Boys Republic will run only one year, while an assessment facility is being built in Detroit.

"We, as much as you, want to get back to our 60 beds in the (long-term) treatment program," said James Grannan, board president. "We have no intention of expanding or renewing the program."

At the Farmington Hills City Council meeting Monday, councilman Paul Sowerby asked for assurances that the contract for the assessment program would not be re-signed in April 1990. But Grannan said the decision can't be made unless all board members for the medium-secure home for delinquent boys

ages 12-17 have a chance to vote on the issue.

The Burton Center, on Mack and John R, is scheduled to be complete by November. It will house up to 68 delinquent boys who require medium security, said Daniel Chaney, regional director of Wayne Metro Residential Services for the DSS.

"The city must recognize that this (assessment) program is a change in use," said George Roberts, Olde Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association president. "This will open the door to further expansion."

"The area has now become a prison and a new stigma is placed on residents. There is a prison in their back yards," said Massie Kurzeja, who lives a half mile away.

BOYS REPUBLIC officials said

residents don't want to negotiate modifications to the assessment program or the one-year contract.

"What some of you really want to do is to kill it," said state Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, who is a board member. "They want this thing dead."

"Boys Republic has outlived its usefulness and closing it down altogether has got to be one of the alternatives," said Walter Ream, a Spring Valley resident.

A tour of the facility Saturday led to more concerns for some city council members.

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi said he was frustrated with unclear answers to his questions regarding the program change.

"After our tour on Saturday, I found a misprint," said council-

woman Jean Fox. "The Boys Republic as we have known it since 1923 is not there today."

The city council can't decide whether the 99-year-old institution should continue to exist, Faxon said.

THE DSS sends boys who have undergone treatment to the assessment program for a four-week evaluation before placing them in a long-term treatment facility. Only boys who require medium security will go there, the DSS said.

"The community is much better off with this style of treatment," said Nelson Griffith, a staff training consultant for the assessment program.

In May, Boys Republic, a private, non-profit, social service agency, secured a \$1 million mortgage for immediate renovations and entered

into the contract with DSS to set up the assessment program.

In exchange for improved security, the state, strapped for beds for delinquents, will continue to send more boys to Boys Republic. As part of the agreement, the facility will receive a higher daily paycheck.

Previously, Boys Republic offered only long-term treatment for as many as 65 delinquent boys, sent to the facility by the DSS.

The 22 boys in the current treatment program who will be separated from the 40 boys to be enrolled in the assessment program.

Assessment program boys will be housed in two fully secure buildings and will have no community access. Treatment program boys will be housed in a renovated building with perimeter security and will continue to have supervised community access, Boys Republic officials said.



Jack Faxon state senator

State controls Boys Republic, neighbors charge

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The assessment program, started in July, houses up to 40 wards of the state, some repeat offenders placed in the medium-security facility by the DSS, for a four-week evaluation before placement in a long-term treatment program.

Last year, the DSS warned Boys Republic it would stop placing delinquent boys ages 12-17 at the 60-acre, wooded site, on Nine Mile, west of Inkster, if security was not improved to lower the high truancy rate, Grannan said.

A REPORT by Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer showed 68 truantries in 1987 and 68 truantries in 1988 for the 79 boys housed at the facility each year. For the first eight months of 1989, 12 of the 22 boys housed in the treatment program have been reported truant.

"Are the citizens of Farmington Hills going to be safe?" DuFresne asked. "They haven't been. But we didn't know that."

"The program that we have worked with Boys Republic on redesigning would come into line with the requirements of the program that have resulted only six truantries over the past two and a half years with 2,500 youngsters (in Wayne

County)," said Daniel Chaney, regional director of Wayne Metro Residential Services for the DSS.

ALTHOUGH THE DSS controls the intake, the department has made a verbal agreement with Boys Republic that Class I and Class II offenders, involved in crimes such as murder, rape and kidnapping, and selected Class III offenders will not be placed at Boys Republic, Chaney said.

The department would agree to amend the contract in writing as to the verbal agreement, Chaney said.

"I was placed when the DSS agreed not to send my Class I, Class II and selected Class III offenders to the facility," Dwyer said.

The contract includes an escalation policy allowing Boys Republic to ask the DSS to remove a boy exhibiting behavior harmful to himself or others, or who is habitually truant or violates program rules and shows a pattern of behavior that is out of control.

The youth may be removed as soon as 24 hours after placement, Chaney said.

The report indicated the type of youth entering Boys Republic in the assessment program is not different from the type of youth in the treatment program.

In 1987, 90 percent of the boys at the facility had been charged with Class III offenses, which include breaking and entering, auto theft and trafficking in less than 650 grams of drugs, the report said.

DWYER SUGGESTS that the DSS modify the contract further to limit Boys Republic residents to those charged with trafficking in less than 50 grams of drugs and to forbid other Class III offenses, such as boys involved in assault with a dangerous weapon or breaking and entering of an occupied dwelling.

In 1988, 74 percent of Boys Republic residents were Class III offenders. So far in 1989, 81 percent of the boys in the assessment program have been Class III offenders, close to the 83 percent Class III offenders in the treatment program.

"Their (the DSS) CAR committee (Case Assessment Review commit-

tee) is the one that makes the determination and not even the court can order placement into the facilities," said Martin Krohner, Farmington Hills resident and an assistant prosecutor in the Wayne County Juvenile Court.

"When the state gets hard up for space or they get into a budget crunch, they can simply change the classification of the boys," DuFresne said. "Today we're a II and tomorrow we're a IV and next week we're a III. Again, no control."

Class I and Class II offenders have never been placed at Boys Republic, the report read.

There are two other medium-security assessment programs in the county. The St. Thomas Assessment Center in Detroit houses 27 males. The Monte Vista Assessment Center, also in Detroit, changed from an open to a medium-security facility in July. It houses 16 girls.



Floyd DuFresne, vice president of the Olde Town/Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association, wonders just how secure his neighborhood is with changes that have occurred at Boys Republic. The issue was discussed for 3 1/2 hours at a Farmington Hills City Council meeting Monday.

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