

Turnagain Community Council

Board of Directors

c/o TCC President Cathy L. Gleason
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907-248-0442 tccpresident@yahoo.com

January 25, 2013

Sent via Email to:
delisa.culpepper@alaska.gov

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees
c/o Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Loop
Anchorage, Alaska 99515

RE: Proposed Long House Supported Housing Project

Dear Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on a proposal that is on your upcoming Board of Trustees' meeting agenda January 30, 2013, in Juneau. Specifically, Turnagain Community Council's (TCC) Board of Directors is providing comments on the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority's (The Trust) proposal to provide funding from the corpus (principal) of The Trust's fund for acquisition of the Long House Alaskan Hotel (Long House) property, located at 4335 Wisconsin Street, Anchorage, Alaska. This acquisition would be for the purpose of converting the Long House property into housing for the severely mentally ill, some with potentially chronic alcoholism and other substance-related disorders. It is our understanding The Trust Board of Trustees would have to approve this funding action.

TCC Board of Directors comments include the following with regard to the Long House housing proposal:

- Motion passed at TCC March 1, 2012, meeting (meeting minutes attached)
- Resolution passed at Spenard Community Council January 9, 2013, meeting (attached)
- Motion passed at Joint Spenard/Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee January 14, 2013, meeting
- Formal request for a Board of Trustees public hearing

For those of you who may not be familiar with community council boundaries in the area of the Long House along Wisconsin Street in Anchorage, this property falls within the Spenard Community Council (SCC) boundaries. However, it is directly adjacent to one of the southern boundaries of TCC (map of TCC boundary attached). While not receiving any kind of communication or notification directly from The Trust or Alaska Community Mental Health Services (ACMHS) regarding a proposed severely mentally ill housing project next to the Turnagain neighborhood, I was contacted by a concerned resident about this proposal in late December 2011. To ensure appropriate community awareness of this likely controversial project at Long House, I sent out a notice to surrounding residents and businesses to inform them that

this proposal would be on our March 1, 2012, TCC meeting agenda.

The TCC Board would like to make it clear that at no time since our council initiated discussions about the Long House housing proposal have we heard anyone express any doubt that there is a need for appropriate, affordable housing for residents in this community, including those with mental illness. *That is not the issue we are addressing.*

Since the public became aware of the Long House housing proposal last year, a significant amount of residents have expressed numerous concerns and questions to me as TCC president, and TCC in general, via phone, email, meetings and one-on-one conversations. While not inclusive, some of the issues raised numerous times include the wisdom of housing 48 severely mentally ill residents in one housing complex with very little 24/7 supervision and very few onsite services that these residents may need readily available to them; the location of the Long House in relationship to its close proximity to a church day care facility and children's school bus stop; and the fact that it is not conveniently located near medical, rehabilitation or treatment facilities that provide services, which may be needed by the proposed residential demographic. Many other concerns and questions have also been brought up during the continuing dialogue.

As I've already mentioned, after TCC first became aware of the Long House mentally ill housing project, I scheduled this item on our March 1, 2012, regular meeting agenda. ACMHS Executive Director Mr. Jerry Jenkins was invited to provide information on the proposal and address questions and concerns. At that time, our primary sources of information on the Long House housing proposal was from a phone call I initiated with Mr. Jenkins in January 2012; ACMHS and The Trust's FY2013 State Funding Request; a December 22, 2011, Municipality of Anchorage Community Development Department Use Determination letter, and a Draft Long House Proposed Use Brief (dated 11/8/2011) written by ACMHS and The Trust.

Turnagain Community Council March 1, 2012, Meeting *Approval of Motion Regarding the Long House Proposal*

At the TCC March 1, 2012, meeting, Mr. Jenkins, along with Ms. Nancy Burke from The Trust, and Mr. Bruce Geraghty from the State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services, discussed the Long House housing proposal. This generated a lot of questions and comments from those in attendance. At the conclusion of this agenda item, based on the information provided at that time, TCC passed a motion stating that **"The Turnagain Community Council opposes the use of the Long House as a residence for the chronically mentally ill as proposed by the Anchorage Community Mental Health Services proposal."** This motion passed 31 in favor; 8 opposed. Three of those voting no came up to me after the meeting and stated that they do not necessarily support the housing project, they just felt like a lot more information was needed before they could make a decision. Minutes from this meeting are attached.

After the Legislature did not act on the funding request by ACMHS and The Trust last year, TCC was not provided any updated information on the Long House housing proposal until Municipality of Anchorage Ombudsman Darrel Hess emailed Spenard Community Council President Jim Bowers and myself on November 28, 2012, informing us that ACMHS planned to move forward with the project, without seeking legislative funding. Based on the previous level of interest/concern regarding this issue, as TCC president, I made two decisions: 1) to put this on our December 6, 2012, meeting agenda; and 2) to initiate a Joint Spenard/Turnagain Community Council Committee to collaborate future efforts regarding the Long House proposal. I invited

Mr. Jenkins to the TCC December 6th meeting to provide a Long House project update; he declined. I invited Mr. Hess, who did attend the meeting to discuss a “difficult dialogue” process he and Municipality of Anchorage Assembly Chair Ernie Hall could facilitate between the community councils, ACMHS and The Trust, since it appeared this housing project was going to take place at the Long House. He recommended the council form a committee to more closely follow this issue, which I had already done, and I passed around a sign-up sheet for those wishing to participate in the committee. Mr. Hess had attended the Spenard Community Council meeting the previous evening on December 5, 2012, and provided a similar proposal. I attended the SCC meeting as well and, with SCC President Bowers’ approval, discussed the idea of a Joint Council Committee and passed around a sign-up sheet.

The first and only meeting, so far, that Mr. Hess and Assembly Chair Hall organized took place on December 11, 2012, where SCC President Bowers and I as TCC President were the only invited council members to attend. At this meeting, Ms. Burke announced two important items: 1) that The Trust would, for the first time in The Trust’s history, be using money from the corpus (principal) of The Trust’s Fund for the Long House property acquisition, and 2) that The Trust Board of Trustees would meet at the end of January 2013, in Juneau to discuss and vote on the proposal.

Spenard Community Council January 9, 2013, Meeting
Approval of Resolution Regarding the Long House Proposal

The Long House housing proposal was on the SCC’s January 9, 2013, agenda, for the purpose of discussing a resolution on this item. **The Spenard Community Council took action and passed a resolution on the Long House project. This resolution passed 14 in favor; 0 opposed. One of the key items in the resolution “asks that The Trust delay any action toward the acquisition of the Long House until...at least one public hearing be held in Spenard...”** The resolution is attached to this letter.

Joint Spenard/Turnagain Community Council Committee January 14, 2013, Meeting
Approval of Motion Regarding the Long House Proposal

The Joint Spenard/Turnagain Community Council Committee met for the first time January 14th of this year. At this meeting, the committee passed a motion stating, **“It has been moved and passed that the Joint Spenard/Turnagain Council Committee requests that the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees postpone any decision regarding The Trust's proposal to providing funding for acquisition of the Long House Alaskan Hotel in Anchorage for the purpose of converting the property into housing for the severely mentally ill until the Board's May meeting. This is to allow for the Board to hold a comprehensive public hearing on the proposal in Anchorage (specifically, Spenard) and to allow for community dialog for the purpose of pursuing community wellness.** The motion passed 11 in favor; 2 opposed.

Please note that the two “no” votes were made by the TCC Committee Co-Chair and myself — for the sole purpose that we did not support the phrase, “for the purpose of pursuing community wellness.” We felt it was vague and not explicitly conveying the purpose of the request: that there has been a great deal of controversy and concern regarding the Long House housing proposal, with many questions unanswered and plan details yet to be provided to the community, and the community should be provided an opportunity to address the Board of Trustees in person

at a formal public hearing in Anchorage, where the proposed housing project is located. *Please note that the vague wording at the end of the motion does not preclude our support of the essence of the motion — that a formal public hearing be held in Anchorage.*

**Turnagain Community Council Board of Directors
Endorsement of the Spenard Community Council Resolution and the
Joint Spenard/Turnagain Community Council Committee Recommendation
Regarding the Long House Proposal**

The TCC Board of Directors has voted unanimously to endorse the SCC Resolution and the Joint Council Committee recommendation regarding the request for a public hearing to be held on this important matter for our community council area. Please note: 1) this voting took place via email; and 2) that some of the TCC Board Members questioned the “community wellness” wording at the end of the Joint Committee motion and would have preferred more specific purpose wording. However, this did not prevent any member from supporting the committee motion.

**Turnagain Community Council Board of Directors
*Request for The Trust Board of Trustees Formal Public Hearing***

The Turnagain Community Council Board of Directors, on behalf of the Turnagain Community Council, an organization authorized to exist under Anchorage Municipal Charter, Article VIII, requests that the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees hold a formal public hearing in Anchorage (specifically in the Spenard Community Council area where the Long House property is located, if possible) on the proposal for The Trust to provide funding for the acquisition of the Long House Alaskan Hotel property located at 4335 Wisconsin Street, Anchorage, Alaska, for the purpose of converting the Long House into housing for the severely mentally ill, and that this public hearing be held before the Board of Trustees makes any decision regarding approval of allowing The Trust to provide acquisition funding for the Long House property. It is TCC’s understanding that this request is allowed per the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Bylaws, Article V. Section 6. (b),

Thank you for your consideration of our comments and public hearing request on the Long House housing proposal, which could have direct impacts on the Turnagain neighborhood. Based on the information we have been provided up to this point, a formal public hearing conducted by The Trust Board of Trustees would be the ONLY formal public process to take place regarding the Long House proposal. The TCC Board of Directors hopes the Board of Trustees determines that holding a formal public hearing in Anchorage would be a reasonable, proper action to take, in order to provide a forum for residents of our local community to directly provide input on this important funding decision. Turnagain Community Council looks forward to your prompt response to our public hearing request.

Sincerely,

Cathy L. Gleason
Turnagain Community Council President

Attachments:

Turnagain Community Council March 1, 2012, meeting minutes
 Spenard Community Council January 9, 2013, Resolution on Long House Proposal
 Turnagain Community Council Boundary Map

CC List:

State of Alaska Governor Sean Parnell
 State of Alaska Office of the Ombudsman Linda Lord-Jenkins
 State of Alaska Boards and Commissions Director Jason Hooley
 State of Alaska Department of Revenue Commissioner Bryan Butcher
 State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services Social Services Program Coordinator Bruce Geraghty
 Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Chief Executive Officer Jeff Jessee
 Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Program Officer Nancy Burke
 Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Chief Operating Officer Delisa Culpepper
 Anchorage Community Mental Health Services Executive Director Jerry Jenkins
 Anchorage Community Mental Health Services Development & Technical Assistance Consultant John Sperbeck
 Anchorage Community Mental Health Services Executive Coordinator Heather Ireland
 Alaska State Senator Hollis French
 Alaska State Representative Lindsey Holmes
 Alaska State Senator Berta Gardner
 Alaska State Representative Harriet Drummond
 Aide to Senator French Cindy Smith
 Anchorage Mayor Dan Sullivan
 Municipality of Anchorage Community Planning Department Supervisor Erika McConnell
 West Anchorage Assembly Representative Ernie Hall
 West Anchorage Assembly Representative Cheryl Frasca
 Aide to Assembly Member Hall Ira Perman
 Aide to Assembly Member Frasca Bonnie Jack
 Turnagain Community Council Committee Chair Michele Wiley
 Spenard Community Council President Jim Bowers
 Spenard Community Council Member Tom McGrath
 Direct email to Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Board of Trustees Members William Doolittle, Laraine Derr,
 Paula Easley, Mary Jane Michael, Larry Norene, Russ Webb and Mike Barton