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April 18, 2013

Board of Trustees and Finance Committee Members
The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
3745 Community Park Loop, Suite #200
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

RE: Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee – Concerns and Request for Information

Dear Board of Trustees and Finance Committee Members:

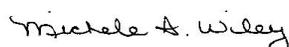
I am the Chair of the Turnagain Community Council Committee formed to address the proposed conversion of the Long House Hotel into a permanent living facility for severely mentally ill individuals.

This letter is a transmittal of two documents generated by concerned citizens of the Turnagain and Spenard neighborhoods regarding the proposed conversion of the Long House Hotel. The following documents have been drafted with great thought and consideration. While a great deal of time has been put into the attached Consolidated Concerns and Request for Information, they are not all inclusive as we, as well as others, are still waiting for answers to previous submittals to you and members of the Trust's Anchorage office as well as ACMHS.

We respectfully request that the Finance Committee NOT take action on any funding requests currently before it until the Trust responds to the concerns and questions posed in the attached documents. Further, we ask that the Board of Trustees NOT take action on this item at their May 8th meeting for the same reason. We do ask that you work with the involved Community Councils to allay the concerns and fears of the affected neighborhoods BEFORE expending monies on the Long House project. Please remember that the Turnagain Community Council has requested a formal public hearing on this project and that it be held before the Board of Trustees makes any decisions regarding the approval of funding to acquire the Long House property.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter before you and the concerned citizens of Turnagain and Spenard.

Sincerely,



Michele A. Wiley
Chair, Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee

A communiqué from the

Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee

to the agents and agencies responsible for acquiring the Long House Hotel
and converting it into supportive housing for the mentally ill

April 17, 2013

In the course of various meetings and discussions regarding the proposed conversion of the Long House Hotel into supportive housing for the mentally ill, members of the Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee (LHC for short) have come to agree that certain facts pertinent to the project are either obscure or unknown. Following is an abbreviated presentation of LHC's requests for information (RFIs) from ACMHS, AMHTA and those public figures involved in the proposed acquisition and conversion of the Long House Hotel.

RFIs related to the operation and character of the facility:

- Please elaborate on the extent to which the Long House project will follow Housing First guidelines.
- Please provide the policies and operating procedures that ACMHS presently has in place for their existing housing facilities.
- Please identify the sources of future funding for the Long House project and elaborate on the plan to keep this project on sound financial footing through the lifespan of the project.
- Should the neighborhood experience a marked increase in illicit or criminal activities, attributable to the Long House and its residents, please elaborate on the resources available and mechanisms to be employed to remedy the problem.
- Please advise whether potential tenants could include sex offenders or people with a violent criminal history.
- Provide ACMHS's formally approved policy regulating the eligibility of potential tenants at the proposed site, including the level of self-independence achieved by prospective tenants and the approved rules regulating continued occupancy.
- Provide full disclosure of the staffing plan and explain how the proposed staff is sufficient to ensure enjoyment of good quality of life within the Long House and for the residents in the neighborhood near the Long House.

RFIs related to the selection and acquisition of the Long House:

- Please disclose whether or not the relevant parties are firmly set on acquiring the Long House or, conversely, open to dialogue with the appropriate neighborhood organs to determine the most adequate location for a supportive housing facility.
- Please disclose whether AMHTA has considered or are presently considering the acquisition of other facilities for the purpose of converting them into supportive housing for the mentally ill. Please elaborate on how the Long House was chosen over any other options that were considered. Provide the detailed and final feasibility study, either performed by The Trust or the ACMHS staff, or by professional consultants, disclosing the benefits of the proposed project. We desire insight into the process by which this facility and this location were deemed desirable (or even suitable) for a supportive housing project for the mentally ill.
- Please disclose whether or not the purchase and conversion of the Long House is part and parcel of a larger effort by the municipality (or components thereof) to refashion the nature and make-up of lower Spenard Road. If so, in what direction is the "make-over" heading?

RFIs related to community involvement and dialogue:

- Given the need for supportive housing, it appears to us that supportive housing facilities would be best distributed through the various communities in the municipality so as to share the support and involvement. Please elaborate on the prospects of working with other community councils to identify suitable and available locations for supportive housing.
- Inasmuch as this proposal seems partially intended to address the homeless problem in the city, please elaborate on the municipality-wide steps being taken to address and mitigate the conditions which foster homelessness in Anchorage.
- Provide a public information plan on how ACMHS will provide adequate awareness/training regarding the proposed type of housing at the Long House to the following: residents in the neighborhood of the proposed project, the Lake Hood Elementary School, the Child Care Program at Faith Christian Community, and to other civic, business or religious organizations in the area for a most inclusive outreach, thus putting to rest concerns while generating cooperation and goodwill.
- Should the Long House property be acquired for the conversion to mentally ill housing, please describe the extent to which the neighborhood and relevant community councils will be able to affect the facility plans with regard to items such as physical components/operations/resident vetting procedures, before the housing facility is completed and open to tenants.
- Please describe the extent to which the neighborhood and relevant community councils will be able to participate in the future direction of the project, subsequent to the initial conversion into supportive housing. In other words, upon conversion of the facility, will the owners and managers of the Long House be at liberty to make substantive changes to the project without community input or will there be safeguards to ensure the community continues to have a voice in the nature and purpose of the Long House?

Statement of the

Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee

on the apparent unsuitability of the Long House facility
for conversion into supportive housing for the mentally ill

April 17, 2013

The Turnagain Community Council Long House Committee hereby submits the following consolidated list of concerns regarding the suitability of the Long House facility, and its location, for use as supportive housing for the severely mentally ill.

Concerns related to location:

- The Long House is not close to desirable community amenities such as a community center, library, medical, vocational or recreational facility, etc. This is listed as a Housing First site selection criterium.
- The Long House is not within walking distance of essential retail markets, grocery and clothing stores, etc. Convenient access to these markets is a criterium for Housing First site selection.
- On the west side of Wisconsin are single family homes as well as duplexes...rather dissimilar from the Long House facility. According to the Housing First site selection criteria, it is desirable that the housing facility fit in with other housing in the community, which is clearly not the case when considering the west side of Wisconsin.

- Many children get on and off the bus at stops along Wisconsin near the Long House. It should be considered whether housing the mentally ill in such proximity to these bus stops unnecessarily endangers the safety of these children.
- The Long House is also in close proximity to a part of Spenard Road which has had a somewhat checkered history and may still not be cleaned up. It should be considered that the mentally ill who live at the Long House may be vulnerable to unscrupulous actors along lower Spenard.
- The closest retail/commercial facility is a gas station on the other side of Wisconsin, which has a Subway, liquor store and Pull Tabs store attached. Wisconsin St is rather busy and it happens to curve just south of the Long House before reaching Spenard. From the Long House, there are no designated cross-walks, other than the one at Spenard and Wisconsin, to get to the gas station and it is difficult to envision the beneficiaries going the extra distance to utilize that crosswalk when they can more easily cut diagonally across the street. This potential for jaywalking presents a grave safety concern for both Long House residents and motorists given the obstructed view (due to the curve) and heavy traffic along the street.
- Faith Daycare and Learning Center is located diagonally across the street from the Long House and has 110 children in their care every Monday through Friday. Naturally, Faith Daycare must be vigilant about who has access to the children under their care. They must also provide a safe working environment for their staff, especially their female staff. While the building in which they are housed has many entryways, they are currently able to adequately secure the children in their care, since only a small number of mentally ill persons seek Faith Christian Community for help. However, with the conversion of the Long House, the number of mentally ill persons visiting FCC during the week will undoubtedly increase significantly, thus raising concerns about the security of the children and female staff at Faith Daycare. These concerns are heightened even further should there be sex offenders or people with violent criminal backgrounds among the residents at the Long House.

Concerns related to the facility:

- The Long House is actually three buildings and designed to have numerous points of access. The difficulty involved in monitoring access to and from the three buildings would seem to be at odds with Housing First site selection criteria.
- Clearly, the Long House will have to be remodeled to suit the intended purpose of supportive housing for the mentally ill. But as a pipeline style ATCO building, it was never intended as a permanent structure. Typically, these types of buildings were designed to be moved and set up a couple times and then scrapped. Experience shows that converting the Long House will turn into a very expensive process that in the end still leaves the owners with a substandard facility.
- There doesn't appear to be a social gathering area on the grounds of the Long House. This is listed as a Housing First site selection criterium.
- Between the three buildings of the Long House there are expected to be a total of 48 units, each of which will have a kitchenette. This means that each building (which is about the size of a 4-plex townhouse) will have 16 working stoves. This would appear to present a significant fire hazard, especially considering that the intended residents are mentally ill and the exterior of the building is wood siding.
- Because there is no comparable facility in Anchorage to the proposed Long House conversion, a significant neighborhood concern is the housing of 48 mentally ill tenants in one neighborhood location. The proposal, as has been presented, will provide little tenant supervision and will have no requirement for tenants to receive case management services (as is required at Safe Harbor Inn, for example). This consolidation of so many mentally ill residents could have significant impacts for the safety and well-being of the Turnagain and Spenard neighborhoods.
- Draft plans for the Long House proposal indicate that there will be two resident property manager staff to oversee the housing facility. Seattle-based Downtown Emergency Service Center Director Bill Hobson has stated that DESC projects need good staffing. He went on to state that a 75-unit DESC complex, staffed around the clock, would need an average of 19 staff members. This is a much higher staff/tenant ratio than what is proposed for the Long House housing facility. A ratio of 48 severely mentally ill residents to two staff at night and on weekends does not seem sufficient to provide appropriate over-site, considering the tenant demographic target for the Long House facility.