

WHY IS THE CITY OF VANCOUVER PREVENTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES FOR EX-MENTAL PATIENTS?

A CHRONOLOGY OF FRUSTRATION AND BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES

The following chronology describes the efforts of the Mental Patients Association to purchase and establish residences in the City of Vancouver for ex-mental patients. It is impossible to exaggerate the need for such facilities, a need acknowledged by all levels of government and all mental health professionals. The events documented below, however, reflect the de facto obstacles placed in the way of achieving this goal.

- December, 1971: Contacted Mr. R. Hennessey of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation regarding mortgages on houses to be used as residences for ex-mental patients. We were informed that we would be eligible for such mortgages.
- January, 1972: Search for a suitable house began. After viewing numerous houses, a suitable one was found at 303 East 46th Avenue, Vancouver (in an RS-1 Zone).
- January, 1972: Met with Mr. D. Purdy, Social Planning/Community Development and Mr. N. McClellan, Housing Co-ordinator, City of Vancouver, regarding requirements for a Development Permit from the City of Vancouver and a Community Care Facilities Licence from the Provincial Department of Health. We were informed that because of the RS-1 Zoning neighbours would have to be notified by the City in order to obtain their agreement to our intended use of the facility, i.e., a rehabilitation facility.
- January, 1972: An offer was made on the 46th Avenue house and an Interim Agreement to Purchase signed for a six-week period.
- January, 1972: Application was made to the City for a Development Permit for Institutional use of the facility.
- January, 1972: Application for mortgage financing was made to C.M.H.C.
- January, 1972: MPA Coordinators canvassed neighbours in 16 adjacent houses in preparation for letter of notification from City of Vancouver Department of Licences and Permits. Verbal approval was secured from all but one neighbour. N.B. Error here was failure to obtain written approval from neighbours.
- February, 1972: Inspection of house by City of Vancouver officials (Building, Fire, Health etc.) regarding Development Permit and Community Care Facilities Licence.
- February, 1972: Notification of MPA's intended use sent to neighbours by City of Vancouver.

- February, 1972: Notification was sent to MPA from the Department of Licences and Permits stating that a petition against our application had been filed containing signatures of more than 50 people, supposedly in the neighbourhood. Some signatures were those of neighbours who had earlier given us verbal approval.
- February, 1972: Met with Mr. M. Egan, Director of Social Planning/Community Development regarding advice on presentation of application to the Technical Planning Board.
- February, 1972: Met with Alderman Rankin to solicit his support.
- March, 1972: Re-canvassed neighbourhood and found that the "scare campaign" leading to the petition had been effective. In fact, most of our earlier support had vanished. We learned that our name, Mental Patients Association, weighed heavily against us in the minds of the neighbours.
- March, 1972: Interim Agreement expired. Owner refused to extend agreement due to: 1) neighbours objections; and 2) the extensive time period required to negotiate with an organization as compared with a private party. At this point we were defeated as regards the 46th Avenue house, after the expenditure of hundreds of man-hours of work.
- March, 1972: The following applications were withdrawn: 1) Development Permit; 2) Community Care Facilities Licence; and 3) C.M.H.C. mortgage.
- March, 1972: Met with the following: City Health Department officials; Miss McDermott, Director of the Provincial Boarding Home Program; Miss Ireland, Burnaby Mental Health Center; Miss Stinson, Community Care Facilities Licensing; Mr. Doug Purdy, Social Planning/Community Development, and others regarding advice on future strategy. Principal advice was to consider the purchase of already licenced facilities.
- April, 1972: Began the search for a new house, one which was already Community Care Licenced. Several unsuccessful attempts were made. C.M.H.C. indicated that purchase prices of already licenced houses (\$80,000 to \$120,000) were beyond consideration.
- May, 1972: Further meetings were held with above named officials, who then advised that we: 1) look for houses in RM or commercial zoning in order to avoid requiring neighbours' approval; 2) apply for a Development Permit for Boarding House rather than Institution use; 3) drop all "rehabilitation" programs from stated use; and 4) change our name. There are important reasons for us not to change

our name, but we did proceed to follow the first three suggestions.

- May to July, 1972: Conducted intensive search for appropriate house.
- July, 1972: Located ideal house at 1754 West 11th Avenue, Vancouver, which had been operated for 20 years by Children's Aid Society as a Boarding House. Zoning is RM-3.
- August, 1972: Interim Agreement for purchase signed with Children's Aid Society.
- August, 1972: Applied to C.M.H.C. for mortgage financing and sufficient monies to carry out alterations needed to meet current City requirements for Boarding House use.
- September, 1972: Inspection by C.M.H.C. officials.
- October, 1972: C.M.H.C. approved financing.
- October, 1972: Following further consultation with Mr. Doug Purdy and Miss Myra Galens of Social Planning/Community Development and Mr. N. McClellan, Housing Coordinator, application was made to the City of Vancouver for a Development Permit for Boarding House use. Concurrently, we filed the necessary plans and drawings which had been prepared at our request by the Urban Design Center.
- October, 1972: On Mr. McClellan's advice, we contacted Mr. Gorbry of Community Care Facilities Licensing to ensure that we did not require a Community Care Licence. We received assurance from him that we did not.
- October, 1972: City of Vancouver Health, Fire and Building Inspectors carried out inspection of the premises.
- November, 1972: Because we had heard nothing from City Hall regarding disposition of our application, we met with Mr. W. Graham, Chairman of the Technical Planning Board, when we discovered that: 1) not all Inspectors' reports had been submitted; and 2) that it was virtually certain that neighbours would be notified prior to our application being considered by the Technical Planning Board. In view of earlier information received from all sources, it is an understatement to say that we were stunned by this development.
- December, 1972: A deed was registered and MPA became the owners of the property at 1754 West 11th Avenue, Vancouver.
- December, 1972: Because we had still heard nothing regarding the dis-

position of our application, we contacted Mr. McClellan and discovered that: 1) he had been notified three weeks earlier by letter from Mr. Gorbry that we were deemed to be within the jurisdiction of the Community Care Facilities Licensing Act; and 2) that our application was now being treated as an application for Institutional (not Boarding House) use and that a further report from the Health Inspector was being awaited.

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MPA has demonstrated its ability to provide urgently needed care for ex-mental patients in home-like community residences. We have received grants and support from all levels of government, including the City of Vancouver. We are the only group in Vancouver providing non-institutional facilities within the financial means of people discharged from mental hospitals.

The City of Vancouver has given us two Civic Grants to provide these very services in three rented houses. Why then is the City placing such time-consuming and needless obstacles in the way of our providing identical services in a house which we own?

Surely when such a demonstrably vital social service is involved, we ought to be able to expect help, and not impediments, from the Civic Government.