

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

7. Informal Residential Care Facility Licensing By-law

- Jeff Schlemmer, Executive Director, Neighbourhood Legal Services – advising that his organization provides services for tenants and therefore has had a strong interest in this matter for two years; indicating that the by-law looks good and that the idea of licensing is an important step; suggesting that work needs to be done to improve these places and improve quality of life for the residents; recognizing there is not enough money to go around for mental health or housing, but that a good balance has started with the proposed by-law; noting the principle improvement is related to quality of provision of care, and this is a big improvement; suggesting it is a very good by-law and that he is grateful for it.
- J. Peaire, Limberlost Road – indicating that he is speaking for himself at this meeting and that he has toured one home that Keith Charles has; noting that the home may not necessarily meet the bar, but it is providing care; suggesting that the bar shouldn't be so high that the residents end up homeless and questioning what supports will be in place for homes that don't meet the regulations.
- Judith Warren, Board of Trustees, Unitarian Fellowship, 557 Clarke Road – advising that since May, they have been increasingly concerned about the welfare of the people in the neighbouring rental property at 551 Clarke Road; noting that residents have been coming to the church and disrupting the services, they are distressed, agitated and always hungry, including one resident who came, uninvited, to a funeral service; advising that they have tried to address the concerns with the owner, Mr. Charles, who indicates that food is brought every day; noting that the fact remains that people are hungry; there is no on-site supervision for the residents and earlier this month the City was contacted about the squalid conditions; advising that people are coming to church functions and rental functions, which is troubling, but that it is more distressing that poverty stricken people are forced to live in these conditions in London, Ontario; suggesting that other communities have laws to regulate these group homes, it is not right to abandon these people who have nowhere to turn and urging members to vote in favour of this by-law.
- Lance Tomm – noting there is clearly a need for these types of homes and advising that he has been in this industry for 19 years, licensed under the lodging house provisions and has followed the laws that are in place; noting a need for regulation; posing some questions to staff related to existing licenses (lodging or residential licensing) and number of tenants to be permitted; noting some operators have made big investments to comply with regulations, and new regulations may jeopardize this.
- Keith Charles, Founder, People Helping People – advising that he considers himself a peer supporter, and noting he is a survivor of mental health and addiction; advising that he founded his organization because places were missing in the community for people to feel at home, and started with one home with addicts helping each other; noting they are able to turn people's lives around; advising that he is trained as an executive chef, but his mental health and addictions kept putting him back in the justice system and shelters; suggesting that that addictions and mental health are contagious; advising he has seven homes in the community, where meals are provided, and medical professionals that come in the home twice a day; advising that there are homes with individuals that don't fit anywhere; advising his hands are full with no supports from anyone, including the community; noting agreement with what the City is trying to do, but supports are necessary to adhere to the regulations; summarizing that there should be regulations, but funding is needed to make it happen, including the necessary supervision.
- Gil Warren, 624 William Street, Unit 16, Treasurer, Unity Project – suggesting that it doesn't matter whether someone is running an unregulated home for good or greedy reasons, there is a need for supervision; advising that at the Unity Project there is 24/7 supervision, and they couldn't run the shelter without full-time, paid staff; suggesting that you can't fill a house with people and leave them unsupervised and not think there will be problems; noting there is a problem with funding and reductions to benefits to people who need them; suggesting that when a church can't have a service without an interruption, there is a significant problem; suggesting that poverty is a disaster over time, and as austerity builds, more and more people can't cope, creating a need for public action on this; summarizing that if we can't take care of people properly, then society and civilization are disintegrating, and that full-time paid staff needs to be a part of the by-law.

- Jenny Finch, Salvation Army Centre of Hope Resident – advising that she was a resident of Keith Charles' organization and that those conditions are really poor; saying that she had to ask people for food, clothes, steal, sell things and resorted to doing drugs because no one was helping and no one cared; advising that she does not have schizophrenia, bi-polar or major issues, but does have a learning disability; advising that one of the houses caught fire and they were all sent to the Salvation Army, a few went right back to Keith because there's no other housing and there are no other supports; suggesting that's not the right way to live; stating she has had a hard life, but that she can understand why people resort to panhandling and stealing, because there's not enough care or support; suggesting that she doesn't understand enough to vote, but if there's a way that it can be better or fixed, that would be a better thing for her friends and noting that she has been almost three months clean (off drugs), which is the longest she has been clean.
- Owen, London, Ontario – noting that he has volunteered with Keith Charles' organization trying to teach and assist with life skills; noting his support for his work, but he has seen the people refuse medication, and they are a difficult clientele to serve; noting a lot of funding is required, supports are there, but people are doing the best that the resources allow; noting more funding is required and indicating support for the proposed by-law.