

RICHLAND COUNTY CHAPTER 980 COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 8, 2019

A meeting of the Richland County Chapter 980 Committee was held at 9:00 a.m. on February 8, 2019 in the Main Conference Room of the Community Services Building, 221 West Seminary Street, Richland Center, Wisconsin.

Members Present: Scott Timm, Robert Scheider, Mary Collins Johnsrud, Benjamin Southwick, Mike Bindl, Lynn Newkirk.

Others Present: Meghan Rohn

Elect Chair: Discussion was held regarding the creation of this committee as well as the need to elect a chair. Robert Scheider explained that his purpose in attending committee meetings is to provide information only and is not permitted to be an active voting member. Motion by Benjamin Southwick, seconded by Mary Collins Johnsrud to nominate Tracy Thorsen as Chair of the Richland County Chapter 980 Committee. Motion carried.

Consideration of Housing Options for Impending Release of Sex Offender: Tracy Thorsen asked Scott Timm to explain the role of the committee as well as the statutory requirements. Benjamin Southwick was able to distribute a copy of the relevant statutes.

Benjamin Southwick defined the five members of the committee that are eligible by statute to vote on anything. Scott Timm explained that Richard Sugden, a sex offender, is eligible to be released from Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center and it is the responsibility of this committee to find housing that meets the required criteria. The committee must either acquire a property or identify a landlord that is willing to enter into a 1 year lease with the department of Health Services. At that point in time the Department of Health Services would negotiate a lease and a placement would be purposed to the committee. A report would be generated by the county identifying the placement address. This report would then be included into Mr. Sugden's release plan and taken before the judge for approval. The plan is reviewed by the judge and if approved the role of this committee would be complete. If not approved the process would begin again.

The various criteria for the placement were reviewed. The placement may not be within 1500ft of a school, license child care facility, park, church or youth center and may not have a child residing on an adjacent property unless the homes on the properties are more than 1500ft apart. Scott Timm will forward a document with the placement criteria and the various definitions to the committee members. Further discussion was held regarding the various ways the county is able to confirm if a location meets the criteria and if there are children residing nearby. Scott Timm explained some of the ways law enforcement verifies this information and are required to be involved. It was also confirmed that property owners do have the ability to simply decline allowing the individual to be placed there.

The timeline for finding a placement was discussed and Ben Southwick noted it is his understanding that the county has until the end of March to either provide a placement or show we have put forth a good faith effort and request an extension.

Discussion was held regarding the possibilities that counties could pursue including working with vendors who will purchase homes, mobile homes, County owned properties, foreclosures or even eminent domain. The idea of group home placements was also discussed but it was noted that this is not likely an option. Scott Timm will send the committee a list of vendors who are currently working with counties.

Scott Timm explained the restrictions in place during the first year of supervised release. Mr. Sugden will only be able to leave the property for basic needs, such as groceries, employment or job search. He is required to attend weekly sex offender treatment, meet with his agent and is monitored by a contact person at all times when he leaves the properties. He will also need to be monitored by GPS and as a result Mary Collins Johnsrud emphasized the importance of finding a location that has good cellular service, at least 3G, due to the nature of this individuals offenses. Lynn Newkirk noted she is able to provide this information.

Discussion was held regarding what happens after the first year is over and the lease with Human Services expires. Scott Timm explained after a year he will no longer fall under that statutory restrictions and the community reintegration team assigned to his case will make adjustments to his supervision and privileges. They will also take care of future placements. Most of these individuals stay on supervised release for 2-3 years, sometimes longer. Chapter 980 commitment is a lifelong commitment unless discharged by the court and legally they can petition one time per year.

Discussion was held regarding ideas committee members had regarding possible properties including a property the county may be taking ownership of, however it is unclear if there are children living in the vicinity. Scott Timm explained that the state generally enters into a yearlong lease with the opportunity to renew and will honor the lease even if the individual ends up returning to custody. There is currently one other individual residing at Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center that is a Richland County resident but is not looking at release at this point.

Benjamin Southwick questioned when the release of Mr. Sugden is set to take place and Scott Timm explained that typically once the plan is approved 30 days is requested to get everything in order but there is no date currently set. Benjamin Southwick also asked what happens if the deadline is not met by the County. Scott Timm clarified that it was his understanding that in the first year the County actually has 180 days. Orders after the first year are held to 120 days. Scott Timm will send this provision to the committee members. If the time in fact does expire, it will be up to the judge to grant an extension. If an extension is not granted there is the potential for fines to be issued.

Tracy Thorsen asked if there were examples that could be given of reasonable efforts put forth by other counties. Scott Timm noted that other counties have put ads in the paper and have invited local real-estate agencies to attend meetings. There are also vendors that will contract with the state to house these individuals and Scott Timm will send this list of vendors to the committee. It was

suggested that the committee keep a record of what efforts are being put forth as well as responses received so these can be presented if needed. While the law requires an individual must return to their county of residence, under the old law there are some cases the judge has the ability to place someone outside that county with good cause. Scott Timm noted they are allowed to place no more than 2 individuals in a house.

Next steps were discussed including identifying properties currently for sale that meet the necessary requirements and that list should be shared with the list of vendors, obtain a map that outlines cell service of the county to eliminate areas that should not be considered and provide an invitation to real-estate brokers in the area to the next committee meeting. Discussion was held regarding the idea of placing an ad in the paper. It was determined this could be an option in the future but should not be acted on at this time.

Adjourn: The next meeting was scheduled for February 21, 2019 at 2:00pm in the main conference room of the Community Services Building. Motion by Benjamin Southwick, seconded by Lynn Newkirk to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rohn

Confidential Administrative Secretary