

RICHLAND COUNTY CHAPTER 980 COMMITTEE

March 7, 2019

A meeting of the Richland County Chapter 980 Committee was held at 2:00 p.m. on March 7, 2019 in the Main Conference Room of the Community Services Building, 221 West Seminary Street, Richland Center, Wisconsin.

Members Present: Scott Timm (attended via phone), Mary Collins Johnsrud, Benjamin Southwick, Mike Bindl and Lynn Newkirk.

Others Present: Meghan Rohn

Approve Agenda and Posting: Motion by Benjamin Southwick, seconded by Mike Bindl to approve the agenda and proper posting. Motion carried.

Consideration of Housing Options for Impending Release of Sex Offender: Arrangements were made for Mary Collins Johnsrud and member of local law enforcement, Toby Johnson, to investigate the 10 properties selected by the committee at the previous meeting, as well as a property located at 15934 Elm Tree Lane, Richland Center. Mike Bindl noted he discovered another potential property for sale located at 28564 Fruit Street, Gotham. The property has a two bedroom, one bathroom home and is listed at \$31,000. The property would still need to be evaluated to see if it meets the necessary criteria.

Mary Collins Johnsrud reported that properties that should be removed from the list included 31489 Town Hall Drive, Muscoda, due to the property being condemned; 21752 County Rad SR, Richland Center, due to its proximity to a daycare; 27784 Sunny Slope Road, Cazenovia, due to this being the home town of Mr. Sugden; 13326 Taylor Hollow Road, Blue River, due to poor cell service, 24749 Spring Valley Lane, Richland Center, due to poor cell service and a large number of children living nearby; 16384 Sneath Drive, Richland Center, due to poor cell service; and 20755 US Hwy 14, Richland Center, due to poor cell service.

Properties that Mary Collins Johnsrud reported as being suitable to pursue included 32951 County Hwy E, Muscoda, due to the property having two bars of cell phone service, and there did not appear to be any children living nearby, listed at \$127,000; 31543 Oak Ridge Drive, Muscoda, due to the property having two bars of cell phone service and being in a good location, listed at \$179,000; and 15934 Elm Tree Lane, Richland Center, listed at \$165,000.

Discussion was held regarding the new property Mike Bindl discovered at 28564 Fruit Street in Gotham and Lynn Newkirk was able to display a map of the property. Concerns were discussed regarding the proximity of the bike trail but it was unclear how close the property would be to it.

Scott Timm noted that Mr. Sugden does not meet the criteria of a serious child sex offender and as a result the criteria prohibiting him from residing within 1500ft from the residence of a child does not pertain to him. Discussion followed since it was the understanding of the committee that this was one of the major factors in finding an appropriate placement. Mary Collins Johnsrud confirmed that statute requires the residence be 1500ft from schools, parks, churches and youth centers, however the language regarding the residence of a child is more vague. Benjamin Southwick read from Judge Andrew Sharp's correspondence in which it states "I believe in Mr. Sugden's case the placement must also be 1500 feet from the residence of any child." Benjamin Southwick added that Judge Sharp appears to be under the impression that this requirement does apply.

Mary Collins Johnsrud was able to confirm that the youngest victim of Mr. Sugden was 17 years of age and also noted that results from an evaluation listed sexual interest in children as a risk factor. Benjamin Southwick questioned the statutory definition of a serious child sex offender and if the criteria is determined based off of a conviction or evaluation. Scott Timm explained it based on conviction and the statutory law. The law states that in order to be considered a serious child sex offender the victim has to be 12 years of age or younger. As a result of Mr. Sugden's youngest victim being 17 years of age, per statute, he would not be considered a serious child sex offender and the restriction preventing Mr. Sugden from residing within 1500ft from the residence of a child does not pertain to him. It was noted that just because this type of placement is allowed, it does not mean it is in the best interest of the community to do so.

Tracy Thorsen noted that one option is for the committee to move forward with pursuing the three properties that have been identified as the best options by sending this list to the various vendors. If there is no interest expressed on behalf of the vendors the committee would still have the option of pursuing a lease with the current owners of the properties. Mr. Sugden not being considered a serious child sex offender does eliminate the need to check every adjacent property.

Discussion was held regarding identifying any existing landlords in the area and if they could be contacted. Tracy Thorsen noted she contacted multiple realtors to determine if there was anyone who was able to help identify rentals in the area. Unfortunately she did not receive any responses.

Benjamin Southwick questioned when Mr. Sugden would be released and when the lease would begin. Scott Timm explained that once a report with a placement is received from the county, he has 30 days to submit the supervised release plan identifying the placement to the court. Once the hearing takes place and the plan is approved, 30 days can be requested to place him. Scott Timm noted that a lease could be signed and in place while this is happening and the property may be vacant. The lease would also be contingent on the purchase of the property if a vendor is in the process of a purchase.

Tracy Thorsen reviewed the next steps for the committee and noted she would reach out to the vendors to identify if there is any interest in purchasing any of the properties we have identified. It was also determined that a letter would be sent to each of the property owners to determine if there is interest in entering into a lease agreement and invite them to our next committee meeting. Benjamin Southwick would review the letter and Tracy Thorsen will send it to properties designated with a

“yes” or “maybe” on the spreadsheet. Lynn Newkirk will provide Tracy Thorsen with a list of owner names and addresses for each of the properties. Benjamin Southwick will provide the judge with a letter notifying him of the progress the committee is making. Scott Timm noted there is a phone conference being held on March 19, 2019 and suggested the letter be submitted to the judge before then. Mary Collins Johnsrud will also investigate the two properties located at 24749 Spring Valley Lane, Richland Center and 33420 Bird Lane, Gotham.

Adjourn: The next meeting was scheduled for March 19, 2019 at 2:00 pm in the main conference room of the Community Services Building. Scott Timm noted he would not be able to attend. Motion by Benjamin Southwick, seconded by Mike Bindle to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rohn

Confidential Administrative Secretary