

## **Neighborhood Advisory Group Meeting Minutes**

08.12.20

4pm-530pm

**Staff:** Fiona, Elly Johnson, Kristine Edwards, Megan Bruce

**Board:** Charlie Kuhn, Andrew Burwick

**Ross:** Tricia Rood and Brooke Akins

**Neighbors:** Melody Lyle, Judy Nogg, Bill Spencer, Sarah Silver, Susan Dawson, Ann Schwarting, Nate Fristoe (joined at 445pm)

### **Agenda**

**Meeting Purpose:** Maintain open lines of communication as we are all neighbors

#### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Achieve shared understanding of what is "in scope/out of scope" regarding Attention Homes decision-making process
- Hear responses from Ross Property Management and Attention Homes regarding Neighbor's input
- Set quarterly meeting schedule

#### **Agenda/Topics (Times are estimates)**

- Sue - Facilitator Role , Ground Rules (3-5 minutes)
- AH - Statement from Attention Homes about Communication (5 minutes)
- Ross & AH - Address Questions from Neighbor's input (60 minutes)

- ROSS RESPONSES
- ATTENTION HOMES RESPONSES

- AH - Set Quarterly Meeting Dates (Annual in February, May, August, November) (5 minutes)
- Tenants - September 10 Neighborhood Clean Up Date (5 minutes)

#### **Next Steps/Tasks**

- Neighbors: Tell other neighbors to sign up for a neighborhood listserv (to be managed by AH)

#### **Future Topics**

- Create Decision Making process for GNSO updates (it's not clear in GNSO how voting is done)
- Should meetings be recorded?

#### **Intro**

- Review of ground rules

- Chris: Feels like there is finger pointing and in a past meeting, a neighbor called our staff incompetent. Concerns that it feels adversarial. Intent was to work together. There is a mutual responsibility of respect
- Sarah: trust issues on both sides. Not having tenants on the call was really helpful on building trust
- Brooke: Review of current lease in line with all agreements, AH is same lease as all others, follows CO state law, it's the standard landlord-tenant law

### **Suggested Ideas from NAG**

- Changes or addendum to the lease agreement,
  - Zero tolerance for criminal activities by a resident on- or off-site,
  - Tighter and more explicit rules and consequences for substance ab/use.
  - Better-defined and -enforced process if lease agreement violated
- Tighter selection criteria
- Better background check process
  - Re-run background checks on existing residents (for the neighborhood's sake and the safety of other residents).
- More & better evening staffing, as after dark is when stuff happens
- Significantly increase participation in supportive services ( importance of services "beyond the bed"

### **Review of Suggested Ideas:**

- Judy looked at the 1175 Lee Hill Lease Agreement. Addendum: crime free and drug free policy. Fort Wayne has a very strict wording in the lease. Based on police reports, it seems that there have been a large number of reports that haven't seen a serious pursuit of eviction. Robbery, theft, assault.
- Ann Schwarting: 3 residents beat up a 4th resident in a public park. They are still living there.
- Kristine: charges were dropped
- Brooke (Ross Property Management): we did more than just talk to them
- Ann felt brushed off in the past around this assault and like it was poo pood
- Sarah asking Brooke: Can you talk about the criteria for selection that can be changed or implemented? In January, a resident's guest who overdosed, when the police came, they discovered the resident had three arrest warrants and they were small crimes that are normal for living on the streets. Are there steps that can be taken at the beginning that will increase the likelihood of being calm, non-aggressive?
  - Chris: We want the same thing. Where people have the best shot at self-sufficiency and independence. One of the requirements to live at 1440 is that they are experiencing homelessness. As much as we want things to be calm and peaceful, there is an adjustment period. There are a lot of people who come from the streets who bring trauma with them and there is a settling in process.
  - Brooke: What we screen for now, we will continue to screen for those. At this point, there is no room for us to change the policies because it is Housing First (low barrier entry).

Our screening policy falls in line with the Division of Housing requirements. Brian's theft wasn't obvious that he would commit manslaughter. There are no changes to our background/screening process available because of housing and legal stipulations due to DOH and CHFA providing funding and subsidy. We get guidance from DOH and CHFA.

- Sarah: How is the 1440 project defined by?
- Brooke: Low income housing tax credit, which gets us funding. As well as, AMI. With our app to CHFA, permanent supportive housing and MOUs with DOH that provides subsidies. These are federal guidelines.
- Judy: Can you send us the guidelines from DOH and CHFA? That would be helpful.
- Brooke: We don't have control over our residents' actions.
- Judy: More strict screening and stricter enforcing, then what are your guidelines for these?
- Sue Kertzner: Judy, can you give an example of a consequence that AH is not doing?
- Judy: Fewer police calls, not enough help at night
- Brooke: We are following everything by the book. We are getting DOH involved, sending eviction notices, getting case management involved, therapy.
- Susan Dawson: Steady parade of emergency vehicles is an indication of chaos and trauma and that is what we would like there to be less of. It's not a disruption to my lawn party, we are worried about what's causing the police calls.
- Sarah: What I am hearing, the hands of the property management company are tied at the beginning and end by the type of housing, funding mechanism, legalities, we did send Peggy the Fort Wayne materials
- Brooke: We are working on educating and communicating to residents better and more often. Reassessing what calls have been made from the building, let's discuss them and ask how we can improve our crisis management. Working to beef that area up.
- Chris: I feel there is an opinion that AH doesn't care about trauma. I feel it's a passive way to say, "you're not doing your job". There are many things that people don't know that our staff is doing. We have internally done a lot of work following the horrific crime in July. We have been doing a lot of work with tenants and staff to find other ways to address our own internal concerns of how to move forward without 3rd parties. We can acknowledge that it's unfortunate that it took a significant incident to improve. We haven't had a single call to the building in almost 3 weeks, so our response is working.
- Bill: There is a whole lot of public information available, when the community sees something available that isn't somehow disclosed, that causes some amount of agitation. It might make sense to reset our expectations of what is out there in the world as far as the police reports, arrest records, I want to toss it out that if we don't talk about these things it makes it feel like they are being hidden. I feel it has led to the escalated tension.
- Chris: Let's take the sexual assault incident. It is a significant thing. It understandably creates tension in the neighborhood, "Are we at risk?" We all bring our own trauma and fear to these conversations. It would be terribly irresponsible of us to share with the community of an alleged crime without respecting the process of the judicial process. It was redacted of sexual assault very quickly. We, as an organization, need to be very thoughtful of what is the risk to us if the allegation is inaccurate, or hasn't been proven?

That line is very tough for us. It's hard to communicate that something might have happened. It doesn't mean we don't have concern on how we are addressing those things. As an entity, we have to be thoughtful about when we share something.

- Sarah: We understand that there is this gray area that you are having to navigate when it comes to police calls, accusations of criminal activity. We do understand this grey area. That doesn't preclude the issue that Bill brought up. There is a tension to figure out, going forward, how to resolve that tension. When you don't tell us stuff, we are left with what we can see. As much as you can tell us, can you tell us about the internal changes you've made that resulted in less police calls?
- Chris: It's hard to navigate that gray area when we don't work together, when it feels like on the backside of that acknowledgement, there's an "I gotcha. We were right". When it feels adversarial between us, it's hard to navigate that gray area. We have shown up the best we can and we mean it. We have several tenant meetings, Megan has met with staff, we have evaluated the calls with law enforcement, we have talked to our tenants. When you feel like calling law enforcement, let's check in about it before it escalates to that level. Everyone, internally, is committed to not involving law enforcement.
- Sarah: I feel that in the meetings, we have tried to be a partner in that gray area, I feel we have been shut down. That makes it hard. It goes back to the trust issue. Going forward, we can work through that. More transparency, there is some fear in the neighborhood, AH feels defensive. There are a lot of different emotions that are a part of that conversation. Can you speak to the ideas?
- Chris: That trust earned is a two way street. We feel we are beholden to the expectations of neighborhood group. How do we actually partner in a way that is productive? We want this to be healthy, and in many ways, it is not. We can take responsibility on how we have communicated. There is responsibility from the neighborhood as well on behavior and communication. To answer your question: We are busy working with law enforcement about what calls have looked like, how to reduce them, what are our options, how do we appropriately have enough staff at the right times that lines up with our budget and availability, that we have those resources before it escalates to a bigger problem? We are evaluating our partnership with a 3rd party security company and evaluating our staffing patterns.
- Sarah: what about taking steps to encourage more of your residents to utilize services?
- Chris: how do we better incentivize? Participating in services does not eliminate someone from making bad decisions. Our staff are good at engaging youth. So using a 3rd party is something we are rethinking. COVID has caused challenges around incentivizing engagement due to also recommending social distancing.
- Sue Kertzner: A future topic is how to communicate. Chris, I heard you say that there are "gotcha" moments. Sarah, I heard you say it feels like our input is not welcome. If we start to remember specific examples of what led you to that thinking, that would be great.
- Ann: There is a table in the Good Neighbor Agreement: The Screening for Success. I got the feeling that you may have a different set of criteria? Is that table applied and used?
- Brooke: Yes, we are.

- Ann: How does the reality compare to the Screening for Success table? I am feeling like those are just words and not really of importance when considering a candidate.
- Sue: Ann, do you have any data to support your perception?
- Ann: Well it's in the GNAO. Is that real?
- Chris: It is real. It's the best we can do with our partners and referral agencies. Part of what we are doing with MHP is to ensure that as many of those things as we can look at are there. In Brian's case, there were zero indicators that he could have committed a crime like this. It's hard to acknowledge that we can prevent everything because we can't. If we notice behaviors that are problematic, we can address that through leases and our support as a service provider. How do we keep moving towards excellence?
- Ann: Is this screening for success real or just fluff? It sounds like it doesn't matter if they meet any of these criteria?
- Kristine: The vast majority of the people who live in this building are incredibly successful. So many are enrolled in GED classes, going to school, working jobs. So yes, screening for success, it's happening. So many are doing great work .
- Sue Kertzner: Ann, does that address it for you?
- Ann: It doesn't. The Screening for Success implies that there is some sort of upfront process. It sounds like whatever candidate comes up, it doesn't matter whether they meet one or all of these criteria in the Screening for Success.
- Sue: Can you share how you concluded that? That it sounds like they aren't being used?
- Ann: Whoever comes up, comes up, it doesn't matter who it is.
- Sue: Can Chris or Kristine address that?
- Chris: This is another one of those "I gotcha". There is something you did wrong. We are screening everywhere we can and even pushing into some gray areas. There is the legal, and then how do we show up culturally or as a service provider? We are doing our best to honor all of these things. From day one, we will do everything we can and we are, in all of these areas. Yes, we are doing everything we can to make sure it is the right place for a person to live and there is a concurrent referral and screening process.
- Ann: I wasn't trying to play gotcha with you. Yes, that addresses the answer.
- Judy: Did you deny anyone that you are screening?
- Chris: There have been hundreds of potential people who have not been admitted. Close to 500 people. It sounds like "you'll take anyone". It's much more complicated than that. There have been a lot of people who haven't been accepted because of our screening process.
- Sue: Peggy, did you have a chance to look into the Fort Wayne materials?
- Peggy: As far as I can tell, it is just their lease, and it is very similar to ours. There are some differences but I can't elaborate on that because I don't have it in front of me. They track very closely. Sorry I just don't have it in front of me, I ran here from a vet appt. We will talk about it again next time.
- Sue: The scheduling time of meeting quarterly. Are we trying to nail that down now?
- Sarah: We meet monthly. What's the thinking behind meeting quarterly?
- Judy: I thought that the quarterly was referring to the public meetings.
- Bill: I thought the quarterly was the "all public meetings".

- Sue: Can someone clarify my ignorance?
- Chris: It is not your ignorance. Meeting quarterly was written in the GNSO and the neighborhood asked to meet monthly, so we started doing that. If it continues to be adversarial, we would return to quarterly meetings.
- Sue: if we can continue to communicate respectfully then you can meet monthly?
- Chris: I can agree we will meet with a frequency that works for everyone and that is productive.
- Sarah: I think we should keep meeting monthly. It's a wake up call that making sure those monthly meetings are more transparent, we can create the space to bring up concerns without accusations and defensiveness. Being asked to not disclose the overdose put us in an uncomfortable place. We need a little bit more credit for our investment in its success. Let's do monthly to work through some stuff and then move to quarterly. We have tried to be good partners.
- Chris: Dangling participle. We sent the letter about the overdose and it wasn't distributed to the neighborhood. We didn't ask you to hold a secret.
- Bill and Susan: Agree that this is not the time to start communicating less.
- Chris: Let's meet at the frequency that works for everyone but it needs to be productive and we need to not feel attacked that we are not doing our job. Appreciates everyone's willingness to meet. I am hopeful that we will make strides moving forward.