

COMMUNITY ISSUES AND SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

Re: Creelman House Update

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council authorize staff to distribute copies of this report to people attending the 1997 October 07 meeting concerning Creelman House, identified in Appendix 2, attached.

REPORT

The Community Issues and Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on 1997 November 26, adopted the attached report outlining actions to address community concerns regarding Creelman House group home. Please note that a quorum was not present at the meeting.

The Committee advised that progress has been made on most aspects of an action plan developed to improve relations between group home and area residents. The Committee further advised that area residents have experienced no major problems with the home in recent months. Despite these advances, the Committee noted that citizens, at an October 07 meeting, continued to express unease about potential future conflicts between Creelman House and the neighbourhood. The Committee concluded by advising that it is hoped that area residents, group home staff and other appropriate parties will be committed to work co-operatively in preventing and promptly responding to any future conflict.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Redman
Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Vice Chair

: COPY - CITY MANAGER
- DIR. PLNG. & BLDG.
- OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, R.C.M.P.

TO: COMMUNITY ISSUES &
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

1997 NOVEMBER 03

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

OUR FILE: 17.918.1

X Ref: 17.455

SUBJECT: CREELMAN HOUSE UPDATE

PURPOSE: To provide an update on the Creelman House group home situation.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** staff be authorized to distribute copies of this report to people attending the 1997 October 7 meeting concerning Creelman House, identified in Appendix 2, *attached*.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On 1997 August 25, City Council considered a report from the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee concerning Creelman House group home. The report provided background on the group home, summarized concerns that neighbourhood residents had identified about the home, and discussed an action plan that had been developed to address the neighbourhood concerns.

This report provides an update on the Creelman House situation.

2.0 ACTION PLAN AND FOLLOW UP

As noted, the August 25 report discussed an action plan that had been developed to address neighbourhood concerns surrounding Creelman House. The action plan is presented in Appendix 1, *attached*. It emerged from a meeting involving representatives of the South Slope neighbourhood, Block Watch, St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services, the RCMP, Ministry for Children & Families (MCF), and Environmental Health Services. The Community Issues & Social Planning was represented at the meeting by a member of the Burnaby Planning Department.

On 1997 October 7, St. Leonard's hosted a follow up meeting attended by most of those who had been involved in the developing the action plan (members of the RCMP and MCF were not able to attend). A list of meeting participants is provided in Appendix 2, *attached*. The meeting focused on two areas: 1) progress made in implementing the action plan and 2) outstanding questions and issues surrounding the integration of Creelman House into the neighbourhood.

A summary of the key points covered is presented below.

2.1 Implementation of Action Plan

Progress made in implementing the action plan has been as follows:

1) *Letter to local Block Watch Captains and Co-Captains*

As promised, the Block Watch Area Coordinator sent a letter which

- ▶ provided recipients with the names and telephone number of senior group home staff
- ▶ urged recipients to contact the group home if they see a young person getting into trouble whom they believe to be a resident of Creelman House, noting as many details as possible about the youths
- ▶ asked recipients to advise the letter's author about any reported incidents confirmed to have involved Creelman House residents
- ▶ stressed that the group home staff are not intended to assume the RCMP's role and that, in the event of serious or criminal activity, the police should be contacted directly.

Block Watch representatives reported that the letter was well received. Neighbourhood residents appreciated having contact names and a telephone number for Creelman House.

The supervisor of Creelman House said her staff had received one call from a Block Watch representative regarding youths seen conducting a break and enter of a neighbourhood house. Creelman House staff were able to report that the youths seen committing the crime did not match the description of any group home resident.

2) *Notification of RCMP Liaison Constable*

Creelman House staff spoke with the Liaison Constable for the area after receiving the call concerning the above-noted break and enter incident. The supervisor of the group home said that staff would continue to notify the Liaison Constable, as appropriate, regarding future reported incidents.

3) *Meet with elementary school principal*

In September, the Creelman House supervisor invited the incoming principal of the nearby elementary school to visit the home. The principal accepted the invitation and seemed to appreciate the opportunity to visit. The principal and group home staff agreed to speak with one another and work cooperatively if future concerns arise regarding the school and home.

4) *Speak with residents about being "good neighbours" and respecting community values*

In the intake process for new residents, Creelman House staff speak with youths about the need to respect community values. Specifically, staff put the residents on notice that conflicts have occurred in the past and people from the neighbourhood will not be tolerant if youths create disturbances in the neighbourhood in the future.

The supervisor of Creelman House acknowledged that staff could do more to provide an ongoing and positive message to the residents about "neighbourliness." A citizen attending the meeting suggested that staff could make a greater effort to be positive role models in this regard. For example, staff could make charitable contributions to canvassers who come to the door, involve residents in taking donations to the food bank, hold additional open houses, or otherwise be seen to contribute to the broader community.

5) *"Neighbourhood patrol" program*

At the earlier meeting, the RCMP, Creelman House staff, and representatives from Block Watch agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a pilot "neighbourhood patrol" program. The program would entail group home youths joining other community members in conducting walking patrols of the neighbourhood. Upon reflection, representatives from Block Watch and the group home decided not to pursue the idea. They felt the potential for something going wrong with the initiative outweighed the potential benefits.

6) *Monitoring and follow up*

At the previous meeting, participants agreed to reconvene in the fall to assess what actions had been taken to date, how successful the actions had been, what still needed to be done, and what adjustments would be required for the future. The October 7 meeting addressed this commitment.

2.2 Other Issues & Questions

The citizens attending the meeting acknowledged that progress has been made in addressing most areas of the action plan. They indicated that they had experienced no major problems with Creelman House recently. They also said that they were pleased with the increased communication and cooperation they were experiencing from the home and St. Leonard's.

Despite these positive points, the citizens raised the following concerns:

- ▶ *placement policies:* at present, Creelman House is populated by two males and a female; citizens at the meeting questioned the Ministry for Children & Families' wisdom in housing males and females together - especially given the troubled backgrounds of the youths
- ▶ *client group:* there was concern that Creelman House is an intensive community care resource (ICCR) with residents generally having higher need than those of other youth group homes; as such, community residents questioned the appropriateness of locating the home in a residential neighbourhood - particularly near an elementary school
- ▶ *discipline and staff authority:* there was concern that group home staff do not have the legal authority to impose stiff discipline on youths for misbehaving or breaking curfews (e.g., staff cannot physically restrain the youths or lock them in their rooms)
- ▶ *confidentiality:* citizens expressed frustration over the fact that, because of confidentiality concerns, Creelman House staff cannot give area residents information about criminal activity of particular group home residents; they suggested that this lack of disclosure may lead people in the neighbourhood to assume the youths are causing more problems than is indeed the case
- ▶ *neighbourhood consultation:* citizens acknowledged that the Burnaby Group Home Policy calls on group home operators to adopt and follow "good neighbour" guidelines; they expressed the opinion, however, that the operators should also be required to consult with the community if they have plans to change their homes' client group (City staff noted that Burnaby does not have the authority to impose or enforce such a requirement).

2.3 Follow Up Actions

At the conclusion of the October 7 meeting, three actions were agreed upon:

- 1) No further meetings will be scheduled to discuss Creelman House, unless future circumstances warrant.

- 2) St. Leonard's will host another open house at Creelman House prior to Christmas. They will make a concerted effort to encourage area residents to attend.
- 3) Staff made a commitment to provide the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee with an update on Creelman House, as has been done through this report.

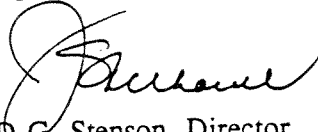
3.0 CONCLUSION

This report provides an update on the situation concerning the Creelman House group home. It reveals the following:

- ▶ progress has been made on most aspects of the action plan developed to improve relations between the group home and area residents
- ▶ area residents have experienced no major problems with the home in recent months
- ▶ Block Watch participants and other area residents appreciate and are encouraged by the improved communication and cooperation that exists between themselves and St. Leonard's
- ▶ no further meetings are being scheduled to discuss Creelman House; however, the group is prepared to meet again if future circumstances warrant.

Despite these advances, citizens at the October 7 meeting continued to express unease about *potential* future conflicts between Creelman House and the neighbourhood. Given the mandate of Creelman house, the background of the residents, and authority and resources of group home staff, no guarantees can be given that all potential future conflicts will be avoided. It is hoped, however, that area residents, group home staff, and other appropriate parties will be committed to work cooperatively in preventing and promptly responding to any future conflicts. It is also hoped that these parties will work together in trying to enhance ongoing relations between the group home and broader community. The improved communication and trust that has developed between St. Leonard's and area residents in recent months should provide a firm foundation on which to build.

In closing, it is recommended that staff be authorized to distribute copies of this report to people attending the 1997 October 7 meeting regarding Creelman House.


D.G. Stenson, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JF:ma 86
Attachments

cc: City Manager
Medical Health Officer
OIC RCMP
Chief Environmental Health Officer

ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY CONCERNS REGARDING CREELMAN HOUSE

On 1997 June 18, St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services hosted a meeting to discuss community concerns surrounding Creelman House. The meeting was attended by representatives of the South Slope neighbourhood, St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services, the RCMP, Ministry for Children & Families (MCF), Environmental Health Services, and the Burnaby Planning Department (attending on behalf of the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee). Those in attendance agreed on the following six-point action plan:

- 1) The neighbourhood Block Watch representative at the meeting offered to write a letter to local Block Watch Captains and Co-Captains which would:
 - ▶ provide the recipients with the names and telephone number of senior group home staff;
 - ▶ urge them to contact the group home if they see young people getting into trouble whom they believe to be residents of Creelman House, noting as many details as possible about the youths;
 - ▶ ask them to advise the letter's author about any reported incidents confirmed to have involved Creelman House residents;
 - ▶ stress that the group home staff are not intended to assume the RCMP's role and that, in the event of serious or criminal activity, the police should be contacted directly.
- 2) Creelman House employees agreed to notify the RCMP Liaison Constable for the area when they receive complaints about residents of the home from Block Watch Captains or others. Employees also agreed to notify the Liaison Constable when they receive complaints about youths who are not from Creelman House.
- 3) The supervisor of Creelman House offered to arrange a meeting with the incoming principal of the nearby elementary school in 1997 September. She indicated that she would invite the principal to visit the home and encourage her to telephone the home whenever questions or concerns arise.
- 4) Creelman House staff agreed to speak with residents (particularly new residents) about the need to make efforts to be "good neighbours" and respect community values.
- 5) The RCMP, Creelman House staff, and representatives from Block Watch offered to explore the possibility of establishing a pilot "neighbourhood patrol" program, consulting with residents from the home in the planning. If implemented, the pilot program would involve group home youths joining other community members in conducting walking patrols of the neighbourhood. Given the stakes involved, it was agreed that the program would only be launched if all involved had a high degree of confidence of its success.
- 6) Those attending the meeting wanted assurance that the plans would lead to action. To this end, they agreed to reconvene in the early fall to assess what actions have been taken to date, how successful the actions have been, what still needs to be done, and what adjustments are required to make the action plan more effective.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN 1997 OCTOBER 07
COMMUNITY MEETING CONCERNING CREELMAN HOUSE**

Meeting held:
1997 October 07
10:00 a.m.
Offices of St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services

Citizen and Block Watch Representatives

Kathy Corrigan - citizen
Bev Gilpin - Block Watch
Georgia Milligan - Block Watch
Patricia Skidmore - citizen

Agency Representatives

Ken Johnston - Community Care Licensing Office
Derek Pollock - St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services
Gail Renwick - St. Leonard's Youth & Family Services

Community Issues & Social Planning Committee Representative

John Foster - Burnaby Planning Department