

Good morning – My name is Art Ward and I am the Mayor of the City of Bristol. I would like to begin by thanking you for conducting this hearing and am of the hope that we can realize a productive understanding for everyone concerned.

In the early 2000's, a Methadone Clinic suddenly appeared on Route 6 in Bristol, shortly thereafter, a group home was brought into a residential area of Jerome Avenue in Bristol with no consideration of the abutting neighbors.

Another group home exists within ¼ mile of the before-mentioned Jerome Avenue property.

Bristol presently has 11 group homes within the City limits and, without a doubt the greatest objection to any of these facilities is the fear of the unknown, not being aware of the home and/or the population whom it is serving.

For most people, the purchase of their home is the largest purchase of their lives and their home is indeed their castle, as this is where they raise their families and where they live their dreams on a daily basis.

In some of the areas, group homes amicably co-exist with the neighbors, homes for physically and mentally challenged individuals, demonstrating the fact that the fear is not about group homes, the fear is about not being made aware of the potential facility and the populace who will be occupying the site in question.

Unfortunately, the present process is that as long as the group home seems to fall within local zoning regulations, nothing else is required or considered.

I suggest that while group homes may be in compliance with zoning regulations, if only for the fact of the makeup of a group home, unique circumstances present themselves that deserve special consideration for the respect and concerns of the neighborhood.

For one of our group homes, the live-in population of the home is within zoning regulations, but the reality is that these individuals require medical care 24/7; therefore mandating additional people and vehicles on the property, on the sidewalks and in the surrounding neighborhoods – not a legal issue because they are not permanent residents of this location, but most definitely an imposition on the neighborhood.

Ultimately, this creates a daily traffic problem, a safety problem in the event of the need for fire or other emergency vehicles and assuredly creates a different environment than that which is expected in residential neighborhood.

While the use may be permitted, the actual use is stretching the limits of consideration for other homeowners.

The only way to ease the fear of these unknowns is to make them known, outwardly by way of postal notification, media printing, personal contact by responsible members of the occupying agency, or passing legislation ensuring that the homeowners within a certain footage of the proposed facility be entitled to participate in the conducting of a public hearing with individual notification of the time, place, date of said-hearing in order that everything pertinent to the concerns and comfort of the home owners can be properly addressed.

No one wants to discriminate against anyone; the need is only to ensure that the public is aware of the intent to establish the group

home, the population to be addressed and the manner of care necessary to be administered on a daily basis.

This type of consideration will ensure a greater understanding and mutual respect for both the neighborhood and the group facility, thereby eliminating the adversarial, confrontational positions which exist today.