

SOBER LIVING HOMES

Community Meeting

August 17, 2015

OPENING COMMENTS:

Welcome everyone, my name is Bruce Channing and I am the City Manager for the City of LH.

We appreciate you all taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this Community Meeting and truly hope to make it a good use of your time.

With me tonight are several other representatives from the City whom I will introduce in a moment, but before I do that, I want to make a few opening remarks about why we are holding this meeting and what we hope to accomplish.

Your City Staff and City Council members are all committed to keeping Laguna Hills the great place that it has always been to own a home and raise a family. We devote all of our time and energies to providing high quality municipal services, to efficiently managing your tax dollars and to responding to your concerns when problems arise in your neighborhoods. Please believe me when I say that we are here to serve you to the best of our abilities, within the confines of the laws that govern our city and state.

We truly understand that your home, your neighborhood, your community are very important to you. You want to drive on well-maintained streets, you want nice parks and recreational facilities for

your family's enjoyment, you want good schools for your children to attend, you want your trash collected on schedule and you want to feel safe and secure in your home, you want the Sheriff to protect you from crime and the Fire Authority to come quickly to your aide when there is a fire or life safety emergency. We get all that, and our aim as your city staff, is to take care of those things in such a way that you don't have to worry about them and can focus your thoughts and energies on your own priorities each day.

So when a new issue such as sober living homes crops up in our community, I hope you know that we understand that it is very distressing, particularly if it locates right next door or across the street, and you want to do something about it...and you want it done NOW!

Frankly, I think a significant change of any kind in your neighborhood, not just a Sober Living Home, can cause some measure of uncertainty and fear about how that change might affect your safety, your property value, your daily routine and your lifestyle. It's upsetting and we understand that.

So that is why we called this meeting and by purposeful design, it is intended to be informal in nature. We want to initiate a community conversation about this issue, to hear your concerns and experiences, to learn from one another about Sober Living Homes and Group Homes and to become better educated about the problems or, as we would describe them, negative secondary impacts, that either have occurred or may occur as a result of these homes existing in our city.

We do not expect to have all the answers to your questions tonight. Our purpose, once again, is to begin a conversation about this subject and to educate ourselves about it as best as possible. So as you see on the Green Paper handout, the second meeting objective is to document the questions and concerns that you all have so that we can begin to

identify the extent and nature of the concerns and issues associated with these homes.

Our third objective, as you can see there as well, is to create a forum for sharing information and providing answers to the questions you raise tonight. We have also created a map that locates the whereabouts of each of the licensed group homes.

ONE OF MY CONCERNS ABOUT THIS MEETING IS THAT WE NOT CREATE ANY FALSE EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WHAT THE CITY CAN DO OR IS GOING TO DO IN THE WAY OF AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED ABOUT SOBER-LIVING HOMES.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT SOBER-LIVING HOMES ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE STATE AS A VEHICLE FOR TREATING THE EPIDEMIC NUMBER OF PEOPLE DEALING WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS. AND THE STATE WANTS THEM TO BE LOCATED IN SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS.

THEREFORE, IF THESE HOMES ARE FOLLOWING THE LAW, THE CITY CANNOT PROHIBIT THEM OR EVEN ATTEMPT TO REGULATE THEM IN A MANNER THAT THE COURTS WOULD DEEM DISCRIMINATORY.

The bottom line here is that we want to partner with all of you in figuring out the best course of action for dealing with these facilities when they locate in one of our neighborhoods. But we want to do it in a thoughtful and appropriate manner so as to not run afoul of the law, or violate anyone's constitutional rights.

So let me introduce some of the other members of our team that are here with me tonight. Mayor Pro Tem Barbara Kogerman is here representing the City Council. Odd as it may sound, state law does not permit a majority of the City Council to be present at a meeting of this

kind, however informally it is structured. So we have purposefully restricted the number of Council Members in attendance tonight.

Be assured, they would all like to be here, but the City Attorney has specifically directed them not to come. Mayor Gilbert is in the other room and in case you are wondering, there are two meetings going on simultaneously. We divided up the audience into two rooms so that more people can have a chance to participate in the conversation and the exchange of information without causing the meeting to go on for an unreasonable length of time.

Also here with me tonight is Community Development Director, David Chantarangsu, Deputy City Attorney, David DeBerry, and Orange County Deputy Sheriff, Brian Gunsolley.

When you came in tonight we asked you to fill out a form and to provide us with your contact information so that we can communicate further with you on this topic. We are also going to set up a portal on our city website that you will be able to go to for this same information and whatever additional information is added over time.

As you can see from the meeting agenda, we are going to make a brief presentation about Group Homes / Sober Living Homes. But before we do that, I want to go over the ground rules for the night's meeting and ensure that we all are on the same page as we proceed to talk about this issue.

As mentioned, we also have our City Attorney here. Mr. DeBerry will summarize the laws that pertain to these group homes and attempt to answer your legal questions, if possible to do in a brief manner. If the question requires a complex answer, we will provide it in the written materials that will be made available to everyone following this meeting.

REVIEW THE RULES OF DECORUM AND OFFER ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION FOR THEM

LET ME MAKE ONE OTHER THING CLEAR, THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS ISSUE WHICH HAS BEEN THE SOURCE OF LOTS OF VERY EXPENSIVE LITIGATION AND OUR DESIRE IS TO AVOID SPENDING MILLIONS OF YOUR TAX DOLLARS ON LEGAL FIGHTS THAT WE CANNOT WIN AND THAT MIGHT RESULT IN THE PAYMENT OF HUGE SETTLEMENTS TO THE DAMAGED PARTIES.

THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH, FOR EXAMPLE, SPENT SEVERAL YEARS AND APPROXIMATELY \$5 MILLION DOLLARS ON THE BEST LAWYERS IN THE LAND ONLY TO LOSE IN COURT AND TO PAY NEARLY \$5 MILLION MORE TO SETTLE THEIR LAWSUITS. **WE DONT WANT TO GO DOWN THAT PATH. WE DONT HAVE THAT KIND OF MONEY TO SPEND OR LOSE.**

Now, let me introduce our Community Development Director, Mr. David Chantarangsu to walk through some brief facts about group homes and sober living homes. After David is done with his presentation, we will turn it over to Mr. DeBerry and then open it up to questions from the audience.