

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Roll Call

Present

Gordon J. Kuzon, Mayor

Paul Atkinson
Lawrence R. Brenton Trustees
Connie C. Murray
Rosemarie Sugg

Theresa L. Cummins, Village Clerk
Thomas V. Troy, Village Attorney

Mayor Kuzon called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Mayor Kuzon stated the sole purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal of People, Inc. who provide services to the mentally retarded and their proposal is to operate and maintain a residential facility at 74 Mill Street. Many of you are familiar with it through reading about it in the paper or discussing it with your neighbors, or through the communication you have received from me this past weekend. He apologized for everyone being crammed into this small room but due to scheduling of the Council Chambers for court purposes and due to our own time frame it was impractical and impossible for us to arrange to use the Council Chambers. Also, this is not a public hearing such as you would be used to. It is basically to provide us with the opportunity as the Village Board and as neighbors on Mill Street and also as representatives of People, Inc. to openly discuss and to get our questions answered and concerns addressed about the proposal they have before the Village and before the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities regarding 74 Mill Street.

PEOPLE INC..

Mayor Kuzon advised that the Village received notification from People, Inc. of their intentions on September 9th and the law gives the Village 40 days in which to respond. The Mental Hygiene Law is very specific in what it allows the Village to respond. We have three specific options. We can accept the site, we can suggest alternatives or our third option is to object. The law is very specific about what our objections must be. It would have to be based on either a high concentration of that type of facility within the area already or that the proposal would drastically alter or change the character of the neighborhood.

HOME AT
74 Mill
Street

Mayor Kuzon then turned the meeting over to Dr. Reginald Babcock to talk about the proposal and have an open dialogue with those present.

Dr. Babcock stated that People, Inc. was started in 1970 by some concerned citizens and by the Erie County Department of Mental Health. It presently operates seven community residences throughout the county and also operate a day training and day treatment center in addition to social services programs for those mentally retarded adults living within the community.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock then introduced the three people present tonight from People, Inc.: Mr. Kent Jones, Director of the Residential Program; Mr. Bill Bergman, Assistant Director; and Claudia Petrowski, Day Training and Treatment program. He stated this is a not-for-profit organization with a Board of Directors consisting of people from all walks of life. He stated they were open to questions on how they will operate and who will live there.

Mayor Kuzon asked if the clients would be coming from their facility at 6034 Main Street. Dr. Babcock stated the clients who would live on Mill Street are the mentally retarded adults who have lived in Williamsville for the past three years and have been using the shops in Williamsville and been going to work in the sheltered workshops in Williamsville for the past three years.

PEOPLE INC.

Mr. Jones stated the program has many different aspects to it. Our primary purpose is to provide information and give you an understanding of the program. This is a residence program for mentally retarded adults and is funded by the State of New York primarily. We also get funding from the federal government in the form of SSI income. Funding is 50% by the state and 50% by the federal government. The purpose of the program is to provide housing for mentally retarded adults with supervision and training in daily life skills that each individual may need. These individuals are living here now. They have already demonstrated some ability to integrate into the community. The next step is to move closer into the community and perhaps someday into the apartment program and out by themselves with minimal supervision. All of the people in the community residence program are in some type of day program. Many of them are in a day program in the Village at Allentown Industries, or in sheltered workshops or in regular employment. They use public transportation. If the program is too far we arrange for cab transportation, but they usually take the bus to and from work. The purpose of the program is to give the people supervision and to provide them with as normal a residence and as normal a home environment as possible. It is not a home as most of us know a home in that most of the people are unrelated. However, we try to make it as homelike as possible. For some, it will be their home for the rest of their lives and some others will move on.

HOME AT
74 Mill St.
(Con't)

Mr. Jones stated they are out of the home during work times Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. When they come home, with staff supervision a couple of them would prepare meals. In the evenings there is an actively scheduled recreation program, inside and outside the home. On the weekend there are different things to do. The parents visit and some go home overnight for visits. Mr. Jones said many ask why they have to live at the home when they could be living with their parents. What happens when the parents are gone. Many parents with children who are mentally retarded provide home life environment and then when they pass away the mentally retarded individual has nothing. It is very difficult to provide services for these individuals if we don't have an opening. We are preparing them to live alone

or to give supervision for the rest of their lives. The type of people we work with are mentally retarded individuals. They are not emotionally disturbed, not criminals and not behavior problems. We do not work with that type of individual. If they displayed that type of behavior they could not live within this type of home. We are working with mentally retarded individuals which simply means that they have a slower learning process for whatever reason and don't test as high in acquiring different skills. Because you are mentally retarded does not mean you are dangerous. It does not mean that there is something to fear. It may mean they are different because they are mentally retarded. We are all different in that range too. If in a normal range of functioning there are other differences among us and among them too. We are working with the mentally retarded and trying to find those who will benefit and are ready for community living. There are many aspects to the program because we are treating the whole person. We take on the responsibility for their entire life. We depend upon many other services and other agencies provide help.

PEOPLE INC.

HOME AT 74

Dr. Guthrie stated the people have been on Main Street for three years. He said it is an important point that everyone would like to live in a community where they have spent their lives and these people like to live where they grew up too.

Mill St.

(Con't)

Dr. Babcock stated one reason we are looking in the Village is because there are mentally retarded people in the area and parents who would like to have their children remain in the Village. We are talking about a slow learner who is an adult and who needs reinforcement in his or her ability to learn different tasks. There is seven day a week and 24 hour a day supervision.

Charles Abbott, 192 Bridle Path, stated he is the President of Project Retap and has a 23 year old retarded daughter. She gets the bus each day, walking from Bridle Path to Sheridan to get the bus to go downtown where she works at the Niagara Frontier Vocational Rehabilitation Center. Parents wonder what will become of these children when the parents are gone. This is very much our concern. We have three other children but will we have to burden them with her when we are gone. He stated they would hope very much that she would qualify to live in a group home at some point or other.

Mary Lou Rath asked where the client lists come from. Dr. Babcock stated referrals come from families, from social service agencies, from the Erie County ARC, from the West Seneca Developmental Center and we have emergency referrals. The emergency referrals are when a mentally retarded individual has been living with a mother or father and that person passes away we get a request for placement in a home.

Mrs. Rath asked if People, Inc. does the screening. Mr. Jones stated it is a very involved and sometimes a long process. We have a waiting list. People, Inc. services the mentally retarded adults within the County of Erie. The community residence program gives first preference to the individuals in the municipality where the home is located, provided they qualify under the criteria. If anyone knows of anyone who might qualify they should contact our agency and someone will take the necessary background information.

Mrs. Rath asked if the family is expected to pay something if they are able to. Mr. Jones stated it is not expected of them. Funding is only determined by the individual not by the family because the individual is an adult unless he has been declared legally incompetent. 99% of the mentally retarded are not legally incompetent and unless they have been so declared they have all the rights and financial responsibility of any other normal adult. The individual should be eligible for SSI. The SSI program does have limits however.

Dr. Babcock stated a fee is more involved when you are dealing with a child. This person is an adult and this is the way the program should be developed.

PEOPLE INC.
HOME AT
74 Mill
St.
(Con't)

Donald Corp asked about the supervision at the home and what the qualifications were as well as if the supervision is around the clock. Mr. Jones stated the community residence program is a 24 hour supervised program. There is a resident manager at each home. There is a senior counselor and an evening residence counselor. They are on a rotating shift basis. Some homes have live-in staff and some have group home parents. Our program is on a shift basis. The evening residence counselor is a college graduate or about to be one, and the residence manager is a four year college graduate.

Mrs. Eileen Geesey asked what the ratio is of staff to clients. Mr. Jones stated that in our home we have about 8 to 12 people living in one home. There is a full time staff Monday to Friday including two evening people - a residence manager and a night counselor, basically to do minor clerical work and to take care of the safety aspects. On the weekend a relief staff comes in. There is an additional eight hour individual on Saturday and Sunday. We have backup and support services and people come in for the recreation program as needed. While it is not part of the regular program we have a volunteer program for citizens and neighbors who wish to become involved in our homes.

Mayor Kuzon asked what types of similar facilities are in other communities besides the one on Main Street and he asked if those houses pay property taxes in the other communities. Dr. Guthrie stated there are seven homes presently throughout the county. There are 4 in Buffalo, 2 in East Aurora and 1 in Amherst. Some pay taxes and some do not. It depends on the municipality and how the home was set up.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock said some homes were purchased by the state but most we lease from a private owner who pays taxes. In the case of this house we have grants from two organizations so we don't have to go into a lease arrangement and can use the money towards the program. Taxes are dependent on what the laws are in your area.

Mrs. Blanche Shropshire, 488 Mill Street, stated she knows something about People, Inc. and supports their principles. She welcomes the opportunity to be an active neighbor. PEOPLE INC. HOME AT 74 Mill St. (Con't)

Mr. Jones stated one of the requirements of the program is that the regulations of the State Office of the Mentally Retarded and Developmental Disabilities state we must set up a Community or Neighborhood Advisory Committee to provide communication between the home and the neighborhood at large and if anyone has a concern or problem or need that committee can voice it and seek answers. Also, the committee is a liason between the home and the community and if they feel their concerns are not being answered they can contact the state regulatory body as we are responsible to them. If anyone is interested in being on the committee they can sign their name and we will get in touch with them. We would like to establish this before the program starts.

Channel 4 News asked how many adults will be in the home and what the underlying philosophy is for this type of home. Mr. Jones stated the number of occupants is 9 at the present time. It may be one more or less. The philosophy is to provide supervision to mentally retarded adults who are not yet ready to live individually in the community but who have demonstrated some ability to live in this type of residence under supervision.

Channel 4 News asked what the community role is. Mr. Jones said it has two roles. It has an active role through the Neighborhood or Community Advisory Committee. Also, there is a passive role in that they will be living within the community, being with normal everyday life. This is the primary purpose of the community residence program.

Dr. Babcock stated the community reinforces the program because they get to know the mentally retarded person as an individual who has special needs. We welcome the participation of the neighbors in terms of education as to what the mentally retarded individual is. He is not a problem if he is in a good program. If he is left alone with a lot of concerns and questions and no skills he has a problem; any of us would have a problem.

Dr. Guthrie stated he has a mentally retarded son who is 32 years old. He is one of six children. They have lived here since he was seven years old. When we moved here Dr. William Keller set up the first class for the mentally retarded in the city of Buffalo. All suburban children were sent to the city. In a number of ways we are very progressive. The BOCES program was started and provides a work study program until the age of 21. When

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

a number of us were concerned about what would happen when they were 21, Project Retap was started. The purpose is to try to find and assist other organizations such as the Erie County Association of Retarded Children and People, Inc. About 3% of the population is mentally retarded. That is 30,000 people in the county. Many of these are adults. He asked Dr. Babcock to make an estimate as to how many group homes would have to exist in the county before you would not need any more.

PEOPLE INC

HOME AT 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Dr. Babcock said the need is such that you cannot set a limit. It takes so long to establish even one house. There is very little education as to who the mentally retarded are, and many of those present tonight are here to find out what we are. Until that problem is addressed on a wide basis so that the average person knows who the mentally retarded are we cannot put a limit on the homes.

Dr. Guthrie, 76 Academy Street, stated there are at least 1,500 in the work study program at BOCES and they will soon reach 21 years of age.

Dr. Jones stated there is a waiting list of over 100 for the level of program we have now. There are other programs we should be providing for the lower and higher functioning individuals. Community residences take a tremendous amount of time, energy and resources to set up and we are talking about taking care of 9 to 10 at a time.

Mr. Troy stated Williamsville has always been a municipality that has felt a strong sense of personal security both for themselves and their families. There has never been a fear of moving about the community. Two concerns about this proposal are the propensity for violence that might or might not be implicit in the development of these people, and the possibility of a lack of sexual constraint that could impose fears upon the women and children because of the adults being at a time of their life when there is a sexual need without the ability to control it.

Mr. Bergman stated he worked for 3½ years with his wife on Main Street. At times he has had his children with them - two little girls. At no time was there any problem with anyone or any sexual activity that was uncontrollable. There was no problem.

Dr. Babcock asked how many times the police had been to the home or had complaints concerning the residents. Mr. Bergman stated they had never had to police there. He stated he would not have had his children there if there had been any problems.

Dr. Guthrie stated parents of mentally retarded have the opposite concern - that someone will take advantage of them.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Mr. Troy stated he was voicing the concern of the community. He stated that what they (People, Inc.) are saying is that the propensity for violence or aberant sexual behavoir is probably no greater within this group than within any other group. People need to be reassured of this fact.

Mr. Jones stated that mentally retarded does not mean criminal or behavoir problems or a sexually active individual. This is a learning process problem. All applicants are carefully screened. We cannot take the risk of accepting someone who will cause problems that would jeopardize the welfare and safety of the other clients, the neighbors or the program.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at
74 Mill
St.
(Con't)

Trustee Atkinson asked about the amount of homes that are needed and how do you maintain the quality of staffing with the great need to continue to provide the facilities. When do you know you have enough quantity so you don't dilute the quality.

Mr. Jones stated this involves many different aspects of the program. There are job qualifications for every position. If you cannot get a qualified staff you cannot put a facility together. Dr. Babcock stated this has been bothering agencies for a long time. There is in-service training and we are involved with Buffalo State and U.B. in developing a masters program on this and Niagara Community College has started a course dealing with training counselors for a community group. The hardest thing is to let the community at large know what mentally retarded is. He stated he had been involved in a study where supposedly people who were mentally retarded were involved in criminal or sexual abuse. It was found that none of the individuals charged was mentally retarded.

Mr. Troy stated the definition of mentally disabled is quite broad. It includes many things such as drug addicts and alleged criminals in the process of reforming. He asked what guarantee we have that this program, which is starting out for these unfortunate individuals who he personally believes are probably quite harmless and who are more victimized than causing problems, won't change into a program for reformed convicts or prostitutes.

A lady asked what guarantee anyone has of another person. Mr. Troy stated they are attempting to take advantage of a section of the law that describes this conglomerate as a family. He stated we have a right to ask the question.

Mr. Jones stated the law does apply to other programs as well as ours. He stated he can only speak for their program. People, Inc. is incorporated only to provide services to the mentally retarded adult and in order to get funding from the state and federal government we have to obtain an operating permit from the state and it specifically states that it is an operating certificate for community residences for mentally retarded adults. People, Inc.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

could not operate this home and slowly change it over for any other type of program. As an agency we would not because we only work with mentally retarded adults. If another agency were to come in or if home reverts back then whoever would want to use the home would have to go through the development process all over again as we are doing now.

PEOPLE INC.

Home at
74 Mill St.

(Con't)

Mr. Troy asked if this property were to be sold to another similarly situated group, they would have to come before the Board to secure approval. Mr. Jones stated the operating certificate is only to our group and is non-transferrable. If we were to close down we would have to return the certificate to the state. It is only issued to a specific agency.

Dr. Babcock stated they are only able to purchase this house because we have received money for this specific purpose to operate this program. One of the agencies is Project Retap and they will not dissolve in the future because there are no more retarded people. If we wanted to sell we would have a very hard time doing it. Project Retap would give us a very hard time.

Mr. Troy asked who held title to the house. Dr. Babcock stated it is held by Erie Hostels Development, Inc. which is People, Inc.'s holding company so that the service agency can secure real estate without having to pay a middleman a lease. Mr. Troy asked if the corporate purposes were exclusively limited to the treatment and care of, and assistance to the mentally handicapped adults. Dr. Babcock stated the corporation cannot make any profit on the sale of real estate. If profit made it goes right back into the acquisition of another house. In addition, the books and budgets are looked at every year. There are three separate audits - one by the county, one by the state and one by a private CPA firm hired by the directors of the agency. They look at the entire operation.

Mrs. Donald Corp stated she is not against the program but it has been said that this home will affect property values around the home. Dr. Babcock stated there was a study done in 1977 in New York State (the Walpert Study). It dealt with how community residences in the state affected the property values. The worse they did was that there was no change in the property values. The best was that there was an increase in property value in the area because part of our licensure is that we have to maintain top flight curb appearance. We cannot have broken screens or chipped paint. We have to especially maintain the life safety aspects of the house. We have smoke and heat detectors in each bedroom. We have a fire door from the basement and the furnace is in a one hour enclosure. There are fire doors upstairs to trap a fire once the clients are out. It is not institutionalized. We want to maintain a home appearance. We have to pay attention to the curb appearance. That also takes into consideration the trimming of hedges and mowing of lawns and also repairing of fences and driveways.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock stated they would love to have a grandmother and grandfather program at the home.

Mr. Jones stated the public is invited to visit any of our other homes and talk to others in other communities. The reality is that unless someone were to point out that house to you and tell you it was a house for the mentally retarded you would not know it.

Dr. Babcock stated a case in point is the new home that was opened on Main Street in East Aurora next to the new library. Most people do not even know that this is a home for the mentally retarded. If we are causing problems in the neighborhood we want to know right away. That is the last thing in the world we need. How can we do something good for the client if there is a problem in the community.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Mr. Corp asked if there is such a need for these houses why are you moving instead of establishing an additional house. Mr. Jones stated they are moving primarily because some of the clients we would like to serve next don't have the skills and experience that the clients in Williamsville have so it would be easier for them to adapt to new changes without being in such a congested area. Dr. Babcock advised they will still be using the house. The new house will have a better training area. Dr. Jones stated those moving from Main Street are ready to be living in a more closely integrated neighborhood and new clients would be moving into the Main Street home. Dr. Babcock stated Project Retap helped them establish the house on Main Street and we are keeping it.

Mr. Corp asked what the ages are of the clients and Mr. Bergman stated they are from 22 to about 54 years old. There is a wide range.

Mr. Troy asked if they are allowed to circulate in the community. Also, a lot of older people live on Mill Street. Are the clients allowed to help the neighbors with odd jobs, chores, and things like that. Mr. Jones stated they have a flexible program. The individual has to have demonstrated responsibility for taking care of themselves. They have to demonstrate the appropriate social behavior and had the skills for getting around in the neighborhood. We have done this in other neighborhoods. We have both neighbors coming over to the house to help out in the house and some from the house going out and helping in different people's homes. It is a reciprocal process and can be arranged if anyone is interested. We would not push it on the neighbors but we would welcome such an invitation. He stated nobody is allowed out in the neighborhood unless they have proven many times over that they can do it.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock stated it is a privilege they must earn. In opening a new house the clients work together and when they feel they are ready they will have an open house for the neighbors. We do not dictate this. It is something the clients have to be comfortable with. It is their home.

Dr. Guthrie stated some of the people in the Main Street house who are moving to Mill Street work in Williamsville in the north-towns branch of Allentown Industries. When this workshop moves to S. Long Street it will be expanded from the present 30 to 40 to 50 or 60 people working. By moving to Mill Street it will enable some of the clients to maintain their ability to get to the workshop. Other of the clients work in other places and take the bus. The first objective is to try to expand the work activities and then based on these establish a place for them to live in the communities where they can live while they work. He stated it is worth mentioning why the state is anxious to help with the funding of these homes. Twenty years ago 95% of the money was spent in institutions where people were legally committed for the rest of their lives. There has been a tremendous change with the realization that it was much more humane and better to provide a way for these people to live in the community where the rest of the people live and to have the kind of experiences they have and at the same time it also saves a tremendous amount of taxpayer money.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Dr. Babcock stated the comparison last made showed that in terms of dollars it cost \$26,000 for the training and housing of mentally retarded. The community residence program that combines the residence and training costs between \$10,000 and \$12,000. Dr. Guthrie stated this realization has made the state willing to help this and similar organizations provide work in the communities. For the mentally retarded who have no problem except they are slow learners it has to be a tremendous waste of human potential to put them away in an institution. He stated that when he had moved into the village there was a man in his 50's who lived near them with his mother. He was always neatly dressed and would go to the store with a wagon to get groceries. After awhile he was committed to Newark about 80 miles away and his mother could not see him. West Seneca did not have the center then. He was not a problem to anyone but the relative they lived with was having a baby and they needed his bedroom. Many people in institutions do not belong there. We are becoming more aware of who the mentally retarded are and how to meet their needs in a more humane way and also ones that are better for the community. They do very well on monotonous and repetitive types of jobs that the rest of us can't stand. Monday morning absenteeism is much lower. They don't become bored like the rest of us do on a repetitious type of job. There is a tremendous need to find more job opportunities for these people.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock stated if you are a reasonably normal audience all of your concerns are not alleviated. He suggested that if anyone did not want to get so involved as to sign up for the Neighborhood Advisory Committee you could go to see the house outside of the village. The committee will be formed prior to the opening of the house and go over the plans for the house and how it works and functions. He strongly suggested that if you are not on the committee you should know someone on it so that your concerns have some input. You also have input through the village board and through the organization's Board of Directors. Their names are readily available if anyone ever wants to contact them with a complaint. The Board of Directors responds immediately.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Mr. Bill Elliott stated that according to our local papers the organization has changed its method of operation in order to purchase this property. It leaves a question mark. The other places turned you down but here you bought the house and now you are here. You can't guarantee that we will get a proper price for our houses. The burden is being put on just five or six people in the area. To help people out may cost me money. Mr. Elliott asked why they had changed their methods and purchased the house before notifying the community of their intentions.

Dr. Babcock stated it is not as open and shut as going in and buying property. We have found in the past that mentally retarded is not a known subject and if we don't have an agreement at the very beginning the owners are harassed, threatened, and their businesses picketed until they tell People, Inc. to get lost. This has happened several times. We realize that some people think we have not been above board in this but we feel we have no alternative. He stated they were asking \$89,000 and they bought it for \$70,000 and will put about \$15,000 into it.

Mr. Troy stated he was in favor of the program but bothered by the method of approach. When the group was interested in purchasing another house about a year and a half ago they stated they do not want to enter into a community where it seems it is not wanted. He stated it seemed foolish to make an offer on a house when they did not know if they were wanted in the community. Dr. Babcock stated they would not take a house if they felt the community environment and attitude was so detrimental that it would put the client in jeopardy.

Michael Wirth asked if People, Inc. had ever received the petition that was submitted a year and a half ago. Dr. Babcock stated he understood from the petition that the people who signed it did so on the basis of a letter that came from the owner of the house that it was for mentally handicapped and this was a broad definition and could have included many types. Mr. Wirth stated they went over the letter with Mr. Troy and they knew what was going on. He stated the group had the

petition and yet they are coming back into the community when they know some people are against it.

Mr. Jones said he wanted to say some words that might not be too popular but wanted to say them for clarity and to be up front. That was a year ago that we had discussed another site in the Village. The program is only 10 years old and in one years time a lot has happened. The only thing that has stopped us from picking any site is the fact that it is no longer available in that the owners or finances make it impossible to acquire it. What has happened typically in the past is that when we have located a site we knock on doors and have meetings and talks with any neighbors and attend public hearings. The reaction is that most of the neighbors and much of the community understands our program and what we are trying to do and sympathizes with it. We have a couple of active supporters. There is also a minority in opposition. That minority has made it impossible only through deviant and unscrupulous methods for us to acquire the building or home. We feel we have only this alternative left to us. We have tried other options.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Dr. Babcock stated the program sells itself. The community likes us after we are in. Mr. Jones stated that we had opposition to the home in East Aurora but that after we had moved in most people were not aware that we were even there. He stated they try to provide as much information about the program as they can but realize that they will not please everybody. The immediate neighbors have the most concern. We can tell them about the Walpert study and that the property values won't go down and invite them to visit the homes in the area. We can tell them they will not be able to tell this home from any other one on the street. But we will not sell everyone and these few people we do not sell can make it impossible to acquire the site. He stated their approach on Mill Street was that they are interested in the house and they think it is a good site. They have looked over alternative sites. We want to establish a program for mentally retarded adults. We welcome the involvement of the community and neighborhood. They would like to work along with the neighborhood and are open to alternatives if they are sincere and speak to the rights and needs of the mentally retarded. We are not talking about being offered a house a couple of miles from everybody else where they can be with their kind and not disturb the neighbors, and where they are not going to be with the kids in the neighborhood. This is the rationale for our decision and the reason for our approach.

Sidney Parnes stated he is on the Board of Directors of People, Inc. and has a son at the house on Main Street. He stated he does not think that buying this house in this way was underhanded because the home was purchased for a valid purpose and then the normal procedures required legally and morally were carried out before we moved in. We know we took a gamble.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Monday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

He stated that when the first home was established he spent weeks and talked to people and he knows what is involved and the lack of understanding of people. He said you can approach anybody up in that area today and they will have nothing but good to say about the hostel. He stated a previous question had been asked about whether the police had ever been called to the home and he stated they had been there once when youngsters from the community and high school wrecked the home in the back. We were going to use the area in back for an additional work space but when they set a fire there we had to have it torn down.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Mr. Elliott said he feels that if the group had sold themselves they would not have had to change their method of obtaining a house. Dr. Gurthrie stated human nature is not going to change. Dr. Babcock stated they decided to take the chance here because the community of Williamsville is a much more progressive and intelligent area. They are more acceptable to new ideas and concepts. Dr. Guthrie stated they have had many negative experiences throughout the county.

Mrs. Gladys Weller stated the home has been on Main Street for three years and now you are moving. She asked if in three years they will move again. Dr. Babcock stated he can't guarantee one way or another they will move people out. It would be on a client by client basis when someone demonstrates the ability to move into a semi-supervised apartment and then someone who had demonstrated the ability to live in a community would move into Williamsville. Mrs. Weller stated you would have no idea who would be moving in and out. Dr. Babcock stated you would have no more idea than you would with anybody else except that this person has to go through a screening and met certain criteria. Mrs. Weller stated she did not think it was fair to the people in the immediate area. Dr. Babcock referred her to the study that was done on property values. He said what would hurt more was to have a lousy neighbor who does not take care of the curb appearance of a house. The people are not going to be sitting outside on the grass and waving as people go by. Dr. Guthrie stated none of the present neighbors had to go through screening process to see whether they could adapt to life on the street. These people have to do this. You actually have more of a guarantee that you will have no problem with these people living in that house. Dr. Babcock stated you have a couple of guarantees. None of the neighbors will be alcoholics or potheads. They are not going to be playing loud music at 3:00 in the morning. They are not going to be parking their cars in the middle of the front lawn. They won't have wild parties. There won't be chipped paint. You have to tell people it is a community residence before they realize it is there.

Mrs. Weller asked what is on the other side of the property in East Aurora. She knows the library is on one side. Dr. Babcock

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

stated there is a home next to them and two houses behind them. Mr. Jones stated at the other home in East Aurora there are houses all around them. Dr. Babcock stated Channel 17 did a documentary on the home in East Aurora and talked to the neighbors including those who fought to keep the home out and they had no problems with the home.

Mr. Weiner asked what the people do and how do they react in the neighborhood, how are they supervised at night and do they have a curfew. Mr. Jones stated they have a curfew. Proper supervision is provided. We are working with adults who work. They will have vacations as we all do. One client who was in school has graduated and in a work situation. We have a very organized and structured recreation program both within the home and within the agency. They have organized trips they can sign up for and take and are under supervision on them. They can go to camp also. They are not going to be just hanging around and supervision will be there when it is necessary or needed.

Mr. Weiner stated that when we had the heavy rains and floods a few weeks ago he saw two residents on Main Street without raincoats waiting for a bus which was not coming because Main Street had been blocked off due to the flooding. Someone called the Village Clerk's Office and reported it. Where was the supervision there? Mr. Jones stated they should not have been there. It was the fault of the supervision if someone left the house that morning without their raincoat and it was a mistake. It should not have happened. They are under our supervision and their life and safety is our responsibility. If anyone knows about such examples Mr. Jones wants to be contacted so the situation can be rectified. This should not have occurred. 95% of the time this does not occur but mistakes happen and not everything is always smooth. He stated he did not have the specific answer to this situation but he will look into it and if Mr. Weiner would like he will contact him and follow up with him on this.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at
74 Mill St.
(Con't)

Mrs. Eileen Geesey stated she had come to the meeting with an open mind. She asked why two houses are planned within a very small area. There is one planned in Snyder. Where does it end. She stated she was familiar with the Allentown area in Buffalo and considers it to be a mental health ghetto. Dr. Babcock stated they are not allowed to follow what is referred to as a dumping syndrome which is what allegedly occurred in the Buffalo area with the Buffalo Psychiatric Center having to move people out. With respect to what is enough, Dr. Babcock stated that if you live in a town with x number of people and you have 200 retarded people whose families are here then you are talking about 20 houses over the entire area. Mrs. Geesey stated they did not tell us the clients were from Williamsville or from the Amherst area. Dr. Babcock stated that when a bed opens up in a home the first opening goes to a resident of the community or a former resident of the community. If there is nobody that fits that situation we will not allow the bed to

go empty when we have a waiting list. He said he can't think of a situation in day-to-day life where you don't have exceptions. Mr. Jones stated three things are considered when such a home is planned. One is the need that is present. Secondly, is the particular locality and third is the overall area. There is a tremendous need present. Throughout the county we have selected areas or municipalities that are more favorable in terms of providing for the needs of the clients, but they won't be dumped on a village or municipality because we think it is the greatest one of all. We try to develop equally and fairly in all the good neighborhoods and municipalities. It is in the best interests of our clients not to concentrate them in one area. We are going to try and spread out the development of such programs. The village is relatively small and we have no idea or plan to put a lot of homes here. We feel it would be too close to open up another home after the Mill Street home. We would look to another municipality in the county.

PEOPLE INC.
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Con't)

Mr. Corp asked if there wasn't a need in Cheektowaga and West Seneca and Mr. Jones said there was and if anyone knows of a house they should give us a call. They are working actively in all the other areas.

Dr. Guthrie stated Project Retap contributed money to the house and also bought the other house on Main Street. The group represents the parents of people who have been in the BOCES work study program and in general are concentrated in this area. If there are other organizations raising funds and trying to assist People, Inc. in other communities that is where we would find a home because of that money. The state does not provide money to buy the homes, they only provide the money to run the program. Dr. Babcock stated they had lost a home in Cheektowaga because the owner of the house realized that we get state money and upped the lease.

Mayor Kuzon stated that one of the options the Village has which is specifically defined in the State Mental Hygiene Law is that if we object our objections can be based on the fact that there is an undue concentration of facilities within the area. The final determination as to whether there is or not is left up to the Commissioner of Mental Health. The final decision on this proposal is at the state level. The Village is merely provided with an opportunity to respond to the individual agency's proposal.

Mr. Troy advised that this concentration must be confined within the municipality. Since there is presently nothing within the municipality there can be no assessment made that there is an undue concentration in the municipality because there is no concentration within the municipality. Dr. Babcock asked if there were any type of halfway houses in the Village and Mr. Troy advised there were none.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Dr. Babcock stated that if you had some type of halfway house for repatriation of people in prison or for alcoholics or for the Buffalo Psychiatric Center, or some type of mentally retarded house then you would have an argument at that point to kick us out.

Mr. Jack Davis stated the municipality of the Town of Amherst encompasses Williamsville and is a mass geographical area but in the Village itself there is no facility whatsoever. Mr. Jones stated the one on Main Street is very close and if that was in Williamsville the village could legitimately say no. PEOPLE INC.

In summary, Mayor Kuzon stated that the Mental Hygiene Law specifically outlines the options that the Village has. We can approve the site as suggested. We can recommend alternative sites, but in doing so the site would have to be suitable. The purpose of recommending an alternative site is not to remove the problem from one street to another but have to consider whether it would be to the benefit of the group or of equal merit. The third alternative is to object but the law specifically states that the objection has to be undue concentration in our area or that it would drastically change or alter the neighborhood character. After making our response it is sent to the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities who then has the final decision. If for some reason the Board or the agency disagrees with their decision a hearing is held within 15 days and then the Commissioner has to render his decision after that. Home at 74 Mill St. (Con't)

Mayor Kuzon stated the residents might think the Board has been unduly quiet during the meeting. Many of the questions that you have asked and had answered tonight we have already asked and had them answered in a different setting. Therefore, we did not feel we needed to repeat these questions. The main purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the residents to have their questions answered. He stated the Trustees have not received calls or letters on this proposal. When it was before the Village a year ago we had input then but when this proposal was made public we did not get any input from the neighbors or village residents. We wanted the meeting tonight to be an opportunity to have your questions and concerns answered. This is not a public hearing nor was it intended to be one. It was intended to be an informational discussion. He stated he recently attended a public hearing in Snyder on the Lakewood proposal. He stated he did not think much information was gathered by anyone because of the behavior of the people who participated. He stated he thought everyone here tonight has done a wonderful job. It has been crowded and everyone has conducted themselves very well. It makes him proud to live in the village as compared to Snyder.

He stated that Mary Lou Rath our County Legislator was here tonight as was our State Assemblyman John Sheffer.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Williamsville held in the Municipal Building, Williamsville, New York on Wednesday, October 10, 1979 at 7:30 PM

Assemblyman Sheffer stated he has been at similar meetings on similar projects and thinks they have all had the same questions.

Mayor Kuzon, stated that if anyone had any questions after the meeting they could contact the Board or Dr. Babcock or they can get involved in the Neighborhood Advisory Committee. He stated the Board has 40 days from September 9th to respond. This would be October 20th, and we will respond by the 19th. The Board will get to discuss the proposal and if there is any additional input residents should arrange to get it to us.

PEOPLE INC
Home at 74
Mill St.
(Concl.)

Mr. Corwin Matlock, 143 Mill Street, stated he was sorry that the previous home for the mentally retarded did not materialize. He stated it speaks poorly for our Village that we really don't know enough about the good work that has been done. These are the sort of things we should hear about more through our local paper so we have more knowledge about these programs and what is being done. There is always great fear of the unknown and we should know about these things through local sources such as our newspaper. If some incident had happened at the home there would have been headlines but in three years of constructive work we hear very little about it. It is too bad that there is not enough interest in us to find out what is happening in our community.

ON MOTION by Trustee Atkinson, seconded by Trustee Sugg, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Unanimously carried.



Theresa L. Cummins,
Village Clerk-Treasurer