

January 18, 2011

A neighborhood meeting was held on Tuesday, January 18, 2011, in the Chehalis city hall basement meeting room. Mayor Ketchum called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with the following council members present: Terry Harris, Bob Spahr, Daryl Lund, Chad Taylor, and Dennis Dawes. Staff present included: Merlin MacReynold, City Manager; Judy Schave, City Clerk; Glenn Schaffer, Police Chief; Randy Kaut, Assistant Police Chief; and Kelvin Johnson, Fire Chief. Members of the news media included Rachel Thomson from *The Chronicle*.

1. **Follow-up Neighborhood Meeting with American Behavioral Health Systems (ABHS).** Mayor Ketchum opened the meeting by having everyone in the room introduce themselves. He asked Craig Phillips, CEO of ABHS, to talk briefly about the changes made with regards to the facility, since the meeting in October.

Mr. Phillips stated he wasn't prepared to speak on anything, but after the last meeting it was his goal to go back and address all of the issues that were brought up, which he believed they have done. He noted he would be happy to discuss operational issues; however, he would not address any matters concerning past employees.

Mr. Phillips reported one of the changes made by the facility that had a great impact was to move all of their 30-day clients over to Spokane, which left them with approximately 90 clients at the Chehalis facility. He stated clients were no longer allowed to walk anywhere unless they were transported by vehicle. They were also busing the clients over to Lintott-Alexander Park for exercise.

Mr. Phillips reported he would be meeting with *The Chronicle* to address statements made in a recent article about the facility. He noted the facility had always met the required standard for staffing, and they recently added more support staff to address the issue with security around the facility. Mr. Phillips noted he wanted to work with *The Chronicle* to get the facts out, and thought a tour of the facility might be educational for them, as well.

Mr. Phillips indicated they still had one early morning delivery truck to deal with, and would be letting them know the new hours in which deliveries could be made. He noted they still had not put up a barrier to keep headlights from shining into homes across the street, but would be working on that issue.

Resident David Hartz stated he was disappointed that Mr. Phillips was not prepared. He felt there should have been some kind of response to the neighbors, explaining what had been done to address their issues and concerns. Mr. Hartz suggested Mr. Phillips could have taken out an ad in the newspaper to inform the neighborhood as to what had been done. Mr. Phillips stated he felt actions spoke louder than words, and any information the public wanted could be requested through a public records request.

Former employee, Shawn Ryan, thought ABHS had lost sight and put their focus on dollar signs, rather than helping people. He also believed over half of the homes currently for sale around the facility were on the market prior to ABHS moving in, and suggested the residents shouldn't blame ABHS for that issue. Mr. Ryan noted the following statements:

- Residents were uninformed
- *The Chronicle* only reports what the public wants to hear
- There were 13 retractions by *The Chronicle* for misreporting information
- The Chronicle was not reporting the facts from either side
- The 12-Step Program was good, but it was not the only thing out there
- ABHS had an 80 percent graduation rate in 2010

He stated addiction was a real issue and until they all work together to come up with solutions, nothing was going to be resolved. He noted it was unfortunate that those who are in treatment could not be at the meeting to speak on the need of the facility.

Mayor Ketchum stated the city was not going after ABHS and hoped their approach of having the neighborhood meetings to listen to the concerns would help create a working relationship between everyone involved.

One local resident reported she drove bus and frequently picked up ABHS clients from the railroad station bus stop and dropped them off at a local church. She noted she sometimes had up to 30 clients at a time on the bus and they were never

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disrespectful or out of control.

Another resident believed those who come out of the facility are better off for having been there. They also noted residents living across the street would have a better chance of selling their homes to someone working at ABHS than to someone working at Walmart, and suggested the economy probably had more to do with them not being able to sell their homes, rather than the facility.

Mr. Phillips felt most of the issues had been addressed and rectified. He noted the following statements:

- They were slightly understaffed, but the issue was being addressed
- The facility did not have a prison atmosphere
- There were confidentiality laws as to what information could be given out
- The economy had forced them to cut back
- The facility serves a purpose for both residents and employees
- They need to work on solutions together as a community

The council heard from other residents, including one who was grateful for the changes made, adding there was less noise, more patrolling around the facility, and no more drumming. She supported what ABHS was doing; she just didn't like the location of the facility being in the neighborhood. She noted there was still quite a bit of traffic and vehicles parking around the facility late at night.

It was suggested by Jim Buzzard that the city needed to change its zoning rules, adding he felt ABHS snuck in as a 'group home' facility, when it should have been classified as a 'rehabilitation' facility. The resident felt neighbors should have received public notice about the future of the facility, adding the city messed up and should take action to make sure it doesn't happen again. He suggested ABHS do whatever they can to rectify the situation because they were lucky to be there.

Mr. Phillips stated he didn't appreciate the connotation that they "snuck in." He noted they went to the city, and got the okay to locate there. Mr. Phillips suggested they would never have purchased the building if it wasn't zoned for rehabilitation use. He believed they were doing what they could to be a good neighbor, and were willing to talk about solutions to any of the problems.

Another former employee asked if they could look at white-frosting the windows. Mr. Phillips stated they checked into that, but the Department of Health denied their request.

The council heard from a volunteer at ABHS who believed the facility was a gift for those who were trying to turn their lives around.

One resident from across the street reported they had noticed a difference at the facility, adding there was no one wandering around the streets and there were no smokers on the hill. They believed the facility was good for jobs and the community.

Tim Hunter, one of many representatives from the Department of Corrections, stated they were interested in getting quality services for their clients. He noted they were working directly with ABHS, who within 24 hours of the last meeting, implemented a number of changes. Mr. Hunter stated they would continue to monitor the situation very closely.

Police Chief Glenn Schaffer reported there had been very few calls for service at the facility, and the prior issues they had with ABHS had been addressed. He indicated they had developed an open dialog with staff, which allowed them to address any issues immediately.

Fire Chief Kelvin Johnson reported their call load was about the same, adding most of their calls to the facility were medical related.

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Local resident, Larry Cook, didn't feel the facility was being a good neighbor at all, suggesting they should be working with Lewis County on treating its addicts, rather than the county having to send elsewhere for treatment. He believed Mr. Phillips was using the needs of the addicts to further his own self interest.

Mr. Phillips responded to questions from the audience, such as: whether the facility was understaffed; what the qualifications of the workers were; and what the percentage was for repeat offenders. He reported the facility had adequate staffing of 5 clients to 1 staff, noting the industry standard was 12 to 1. Mr. Phillips reported the Chehalis facility currently had 100 clients and 91 staff, and if needed, they could bring more staff over from Spokane. He stated, as the business manager, it was his job to make sure the facility stays open and that they pay their bills.

Another former employee stated he had to give Mr. Phillips credit, adding he was bending over backwards to try and make the neighbors happy. The former employee stated because of the changes made at the facility since the October meeting, he no longer had a job with ABHS.

The council heard from another resident who was grateful for the work being done at the facility, adding there was an absolute turn around in the days following the last meeting. He felt the economy had a lot to do with the property values being down, but suggested the notoriety of the facility might also have had something to do with it. He believed the improvements were necessary, but the neighbors had to be willing to give a little, as well. He hoped they would continue to only house non-violent offenders at the Chehalis facility, and that things would continue to improve.

Another resident talked briefly about prowling incidents, noting those types of issues were happening before as well as after ABHS moved in. He was glad to see that it was being taken seriously.

Councilor Dawes suggested Mr. Phillips needed to be more like a politician, touting what they had accomplished. He noted he was also a little disappointed that they had not received a progress report, and that Mr. Phillips was not prepared to discuss it. Councilor Dawes was glad to hear some positive feedback from the neighbors, and suggested if neighbors ever saw anything suspicious, that they call the police.

One neighbor commented on the fact that she hardly saw the police patrolling the neighborhood anymore.

Mr. Phillips was asked if rides were offered to clients who decide they want to quit the program and walk out the door. It was noted they do everything they can to keep them inside the facility, but there were those rare occasions when someone just decides to run out. Mr. Phillips reported they also contact the corrections officer and very often they try to keep the clients in isolation, so they don't just run out the door.

Councilor Harris stated he was astonished by the fact that at the last meeting the facility had approximately 180 clients, and half of them were enough of a high risk to move out. Mr. Phillips indicated that was not the reason they were moved out, adding they were moved to Spokane because they didn't have insurance and they were putting a drain on the local medical facilities.

Councilor Harris indicated he drove by the facility twice daily after the last meeting and never saw any windows open or groups of clients wandering out and about. He stated 'trust' was everything, and right now ABHS had no trust from local citizens. Councilor Harris felt they weren't going to completely satisfy everyone, but anything they could do to keep the commotion down would help build trust. He suggested no one was against trying to help change somebody's life and people should get caught up in the good of what they were trying to do.

Councilor Lund reported he was pleased to see that the neighbors had seen some changes. He talked briefly about the trust issue as well, stating "How can you get trust when you don't follow through with what you promise?" Councilor Lund felt Mr. Cook's concerns were being ignored since they hadn't yet taken care of the issue of the headlights shining through his front windows.

Councilor Spahr was also glad to hear about the improvements made, and inquired about security at the facility. Mr. Phillips reported they had always had security to monitor the facility inside and out. It was noted they had two security personnel that walk around the outside of the facility. It was asked if security personnel had the ability to contact the police if necessary.

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Mr. Phillips noted they carried cell phones issued by the facility, and they also had walkie-talkies and would inquire as to why they were not being used. A member of the audience reported she only saw one person patrolling at a time around the facility.

The principal of R.E. Bennett reported she was not having any issues at this time.

It was suggested that they hire a liaison to work between the facility and the neighbors.

Community Librarian Corine Aiken reported, prior to the first meeting, they had between five and eight clients from the facility come in, primarily to use the internet. She noted since the meeting in October they had not seen anyone, until last Saturday. Ms. Aiken inquired about supervision, noting she couldn't identify a supervisor in the group. She stated they wished the library to be a safe place for everyone and would appreciate the clients understanding how they can use the facility. Ms. Aiken noted they had some changes coming up and asked to meet with ABHS staff to discuss those changes.

Mr. Hartz stated, if Mr. Phillips intended on building trust in the community, he was going to have to beef up his communication. He reported he appreciated what had been done, but felt Mr. Phillips needed to respond to the community. Mr. Hartz suggested Mr. Phillips be proactive and pay to run his own ad in the paper.

It was suggested that Mr. Phillips also establish a working relationship with the local drug court.

Mr. Phillips stated he would address and respond to everything talked about. He also noted a lot of the people who were laid-off would be brought back to work once they start hiring again.

Councilor Taylor stated he appreciated Mr. Phillips taking the necessary steps to move some of the clients out of the facility. He believed it helped make the situation better. Councilor Taylor suggested they look at getting a public relations person to deal with public issues. Mr. Phillips thought that was a good recommendation; however, he didn't feel they had enough funding to provide for that at this time.

Mayor Ketchum felt the biggest issue seemed to be lack of communication. He hoped ABHS would continue to work with the public to resolve issues as they arise. Mayor Ketchum thanked everyone for attending and ended the meeting at 7:18 p.m.