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MACdaddy

This weBlog is intended to begin the archival process during the formation of the St Stephens Corner Drop-In's Member Advocacy Group.

Forming, Storming and the Status Quo

by MACdaddy @ Monday, 23. Jun, 2008 – 08:51:23 pm

Here is some correspondence I had with the manager of the drop in when I attempted to help an individual deal with their barring from the drop in, and some problems they were having with their tenancy upstairs at Odette Place.

A follow up on our conversation about (DELETED) problems with Odette and the Drop In
 From: r reiter (r-reiter@hotmail.com)
 Sent: June 20, 2008 1:56:28 PM
 To: Robin (grobin@ststephenshouse.com)

Hi Robin, I'm following up on the conversation we had about (DELETED) difficulties with his housing situation at Odette Place. As I informed you I told (DELETED) that I would help him with responding to the forms the TPA requires in their process. I saw (DELETED) the other day and he showed me his barring letter. I found the wording of the letter somewhat disturbing as it makes a direct reference to a "drug deal" he was supposedly engaged in. I don't want to dwell on the "legalities" here but the wording of that letter is, under the law, libellous. As it disparages (DELETED) character, with out evidence or due process. Let me explain. All citizens in Canada are enjoined by law to report unlawful activities. "Trafficking in Narcotics" (which is what the term drug deal is generally assumed to mean) is an unlawful activity and therefore anyone witnessing this activity is enjoined to report it to the proper authority. So to put in writing that (DELETED) engaged in an unlawful activity, without reporting this activity to the police, so they as the proper authority may investigate and determine if any laws were contravened, amounts to libel. In court you would have to produce proof that any substance that changed hands was in fact a drug, which no one can do unless the drugs had been seized by the police and tested. However, the Tribunal has different rules, as you may or may not be aware, and you may be able to enter that document into evidence as an activity that interferes with the rights of the other tenants to a reasonable enjoyment of their premises'. Having said that I will also refer to the eviction notice which was served to him which blamed him for the presence of needles in Odette place. I know I am most probably not in full possession of the facts but from what (DELETED) told me about the incident, it would take a giant leap of faith to attach the needles found upstairs to his presence in Odette place. Again, I think no court of law would take that leap of faith to make (DELETED) the proximate cause of the presences of used needles in Odette place. In fact they might look to the fact that St. Stephens' Harm Reduction program provides needles to users in the drop in and (DELETED) is not the only person who opens doors to let people access the premises.

Again having said all this I'd like you understand that my purpose, as someone on the Member Advocacy Committee, is to try and facilitate an acceptable barring policy which does not unduly disparage someones character. Which I feel the wording of both the documents that (DELETED) showed me does.

Regards
 Russell

Here is the managers response to me.

RE: A follow up
 From: Robin Griller (grobin@ststephenshouse.com)
 Sent: June 20, 2008 3:59:03 PM
 To: 'r reiter' (r-reiter@hotmail.com)

Hi Russell,

As I indicated to you when you brought this up yesterday, I cannot speak to you about situations involving other service users, as that would violate their privacy. Thus, I cannot comment in any way on your email.

As I've mentioned in the past, I look forward to the Member Advocacy Committee and staff working together on substantive questions around barring policy and procedure in a few months when we are all ready to do so.

All the best,

Robin

I sent the following in reply.

RE: A follow up
 From: r reiter (r-reiter@hotmail.com)

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Sent: June 22, 2008 1:07:25 PM
To: Robin (grobin@ststephenshouse.com)
Cc: wmark@ststephenshouse.com

Hi Robin as I mentioned (DELETED) has asked me for help in resolving this issue if and when it comes to the tribunal. (DELETED) has shown me all the documents he has received from St. Stephens house and I'm sure if you ask him he will tell you this. If you need to address the privacy issue in a formal manner, I am sure you can get something in writing from (DELETED)

I spoke to Mark today about this situation as well. I feel that we may be able to mediate a solution to any issues with (DELETED) housing. In fact it was this situation that prompted me to invite Alex to join our working group on the city's housing consultations. I'm not sure that it would be productive to wait several months while the advocacy committee goes through its forming stage to develop its policy and procedures. This group decided to form in order specifically to address conflict between St. Stephens policy and members needs. Good and effective policy is driven from the ground up, its based on dealing with issues as they arise, then developing a policy based on what was learned in solving the issue. Mistakes included.

Regards
Russell

Here is his reply to this email.

RE: A follow up
From: Robin Griller (grobin@ststephenshouse.com)
Sent: June 23, 2008 11:05:02 AM
To: 'r reiter' (r-reiter@hotmail.com)
Cc: wmark@ststephenshouse.com

Hi Russell,

As I said in my previous email, I cannot possibly discuss the private concerns of one program participant with others.

I appreciate your desire to help people; if a friend of mine were having difficulties relating to their housing, I would suggest that they go to a Legal Clinic to request assistance.

Please note that the Member Advisory Committee is part of the Corner Drop-in program, not the Odette Place housing program.

All the best,

Robin

So I sent this.

RE: A follow up
From: r reiter (r-reiter@hotmail.com)
Sent: June 23, 2008 1:05:59 PM
To: Robin Griller (grobin@ststephenshouse.com)
Cc: Mark Wilson (wmark@ststephenshouse.com)

Hi Robin, (DELETED) is not really a friend of mine. I only know him slightly, from the drop in. I think that you should understand that although staff might see all of us who use the drop in as a group of friends, peers even, we are not, perhaps associates is a better term. Much like people who work together, we may or may not have friendships develop with time, but just because we are seen to be together, we are not necessarily friends.

(DELETED) is aware that I have been a landlord and have knowledge and experience with the rules and procedures of the Tribunal and he approached me about helping him with that. When he showed me the bar letter he received, I recognized this as something that I believe does fall in the realm of the Member Advocacy Committee. At the knowledge is power course we members decided that we would try to form a committee to deal with issues that members have in dealing with barring and other conflicts with Drop In staff and or policy. As I mentioned you could talk to (DELETED) yourself and ask him if he's requested my help. As I said, I am sure he would even put that in writing if that is what you need for us to work on this issue together.

As I recall at one of our first meetings we were wondering if our group advocacy was to be limited only to issues of direct concern to the Drop In or if we were to expand that to advocacy outside the Drop In. We decided that we would be working outside the drop in concerns as well and that is how we got involved with Helen who is the social development worker and also involved in getting us involved in housing consultations

I will show (DELETED) the emails you have sent to me and ask him to clarify to me and yourself what it is he wishes me to do either as a private individual or member of the Member Advocacy Committee. I personally would prefer to help create a mediation process within this organization, which could be a model for future conflict resolution.

On one final note, it is common for people to not see eye to eye on issues and yet still they must work together. Often it is a simple matter of semantic misunderstanding. You keep referring to our group as a Member Advisory Committee. We formed as an **Advocacy**

committee to directly address some specific issues we had identified with the way some staff deal or do not deal with member issues. Perhaps you feel St. Stephens is not ready to facilitate this group and its mandate as it was discussed prior to meeting in order to form the group.

Regards
Russell

The person I cc'd in the emails, who is the staff liason to the MAC has told me that they cannot discuss this with me any further. So at this point I am asking myself, why so much blocking of process? I mean if I were in the managers position and I was presented with those request's from somebody I was supposed to be working with to develop an advocacy group, by the time I had recieved a second email from them, I would have invited them and the other concerned party to come to the table to talk. The cynic in me keeps asking what is their real agenda.

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FORMING

by [MACdaddy](#) @ Friday, 14. Mar, 2008 – 01:34:08 pm

Here are, in part, my notes from the first meeting of the MAC (Member Advocacy Committee) as we discussed them.

Background:

The MAC is forming as the result of Drop-In members participation in the Knowledge is Power course offered by the Toronto Drop-In network.

First Meeting

This first meeting was attended by Sergi, Floyd, Martine and Russell (members) and Robin and Mark (Staff). We identified several action items and some were assigned as to do's and some were assigned TBD (To Be Decided).

The first of these was NAMING

We have tentatively decided that the working name of the group is Member Advocacy Committee.

Additional notes to follow when I have my notes with me.

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