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February 28, 2007

THOMAS J. GEORGE
MAYOR

Ms. Jan L. Roller, Esq.
President, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
1468 West 25th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44113-3102

Re: Lakewood LMM Youth ReEntry Program
Continuing problems and unfair burdens upon the City of Lakewood

Dear Ms. Roller:

I sincerely regret the necessity of writing you about our increasing disappointment in the captioned LMM program and my belief as Mayor that the City of Lakewood cannot continue to support the existence of the program in our community, and particularly at its present location.

Good intentions and sincere efforts are insufficient to outweigh the burdens that the program has placed upon the City, its citizens, and particularly the neighbors of the Hidden Village location. As we approach the anniversary of when LMM first informed the City of its plans to move the program to Lakewood, a review of what has occurred and what is occurring is in order.

FIRST NOTICE: When LMM first notified City officials of its plans to utilize the apartment buildings of the former Diesel Institute, the Building Commissioner, the Law Department, and other representatives indicated the City's concerns that the program was an institutional use that Lakewood's Zoning Code prohibited, and that the selected site was proximate to an area already presenting significant challenges to our Police: nearby housing on North Lane already was the focus of a disproportionate number of police dispatches, and other provisions of the Ohio Revised Code made the area one of the only available neighborhoods for special classes of re-entering parolees.

Shortly after this meeting, counsel for LMM contacted our Law Department to challenge the Building Commissioner's objections and view that the Multi-Family High Density Zoning classification of the property prohibited the use proposed by LMM for the Youth ReEntry residence and programming. Assistant Law Director Tom Corrigan detailed the Commissioner's position, emphasizing the programmatic character of the use, the office and non-resident supervisors' occupancy of parts of the space, and concerns about the life-safety aspects of the building for the proposed use. While indicating his view that training for independent living is a "residential rather than institutional use", LMM's counsel assured Tom that he would make the City's position clear to his LMM client representatives.



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SURPRISE MOVE-IN: We were more than surprised, having received no further contact or warning from LMM or its counsel, when on Thursday of Holy Week, at a time when the City's capacity to respond was diminished by the onset of Good Friday and the Easter holiday, the Youth ReEntry program moved into at least 19 Hidden Village apartments. Although the City took no drastic steps, the Fire Marshal did a post-occupancy inspection of the building, and the Building Commissioner notified the landlord of the zoning violation of which he had warned both LMM and the landlord.

The landlord and LMM's Youth ReEntry program staff formally appealed the Building Commissioner's decision and notice of zoning violation to the Lakewood City Planning Commission. After a full hearing, the Planning Commission voted to approve the LMM's position that "independent living training is a residential use". Since any appeal by the City of Lakewood from its own Planning Commission's decision would be questionable, I directed the City departments to work with and cooperate with the LMM program supervisors to give the program a chance.

RECORD OF PROBLEMS: When I was advised of the first police difficulties with residents of the LMM program, only several weeks after the appeal and one involving shoplifting at Sapell's Supermarket on West 117th Street, I was reassured by information that the program participants involved had been expelled from the program and ceased residency in Hidden Village. Moreover, I personally communicated my confidence in LMM to the Sapell's management and requested his patience in letting the program get underway. That confidence and patience has worn thin over the past ten months.

I am advised by the Lakewood Police Department that incidents in the immediate neighborhood requiring police intervention have more than doubled since the LMM program began at Hidden Village. Of course, not all the incidents have directly involved LMM program participants, but confirmation of discipline within the program has been lacking and, what's more serious, on a number of occasions the LMM staff has not only been non-cooperative with police inquiries and visits to the site, but openly hostile and obstructive. Like you, I am sorry that the conduct of an unknown number of participants in the program may be ruining it for others, but I must look out for the best interests of all the citizens of the City of Lakewood. I am also concerned that the anecdotal reports from Lakewood school officials are not supportive of the program.

FAIR WARNING: As of this date, because of my concerns that the LMM Youth ReEntry Program is not performing as presented last February, and that the prognosis for improvement is poor, I want you to know that I will seek to have the program removed from Lakewood at the earliest possible time. I am telling you now so that whatever lease or contract obligations that might change with the anniversary of first occupancy can be determined to LMM's best alternatives and with at least the same amount of time that LMM gave to the City of Lakewood before moving in despite our objections and without further notice.

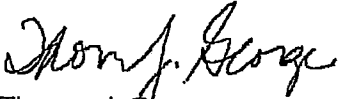
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Please do not take this decision as a comment upon LMM's sincere intentions or efforts for the program, or for the many good things that LMM does for Lakewood or the Greater Cleveland Community. Nevertheless, it is my belief that LMM must face the reality of what this program has done to the City of Lakewood, and LMM must assess whether it is fair to impose these burdens upon the Hidden Village neighborhood in the months ahead, particularly given the City's expressed concerns of longstanding that have unfortunately proved true.

I remain ready and willing to discuss this matter further with you and anyone from the LMM Board, including a demonstration of specifics for my concern, but I also ask that you seriously consider taking those voluntary steps to relocate the program that will minimize your contractual obligations to remain at the Hidden Village site. My first obligation as Mayor is to the general welfare of all the citizens of the City of Lakewood, and I will take those steps necessary to fulfill that obligation concerning the record the Youth ReEntry Program has created over this past year.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. George
Mayor of the City of Lakewood