

north shore news

Anger brewing over North Vancouver group home

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Paddi Nikbin, a neighbour who started a petition against a proposed drug and alcohol recovery house on Windridge Drive, makes a point during a meeting **Thursday night at Parkgate Community Centre.** Photo Paul McGrath

A community meeting intended to answer questions of Seymour area residents regarding a proposed addictions recovery house Thursday night quickly devolved into anger and accusations.

District of North Vancouver staff shut the meeting down and promised to reschedule after attendance swelled well above the Parkgate Community Centre's meeting room capacity.

Turning Point Recovery Society is hoping to build a nine-bed home for men recovering from drug and alcohol addiction on a vacant lot on Windridge Drive.

District Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn, who is a strong proponent for Turning Point, said he'd hoped the meeting and information would assuage the fears in the community but instead, he spent the night apologizing for not anticipating and planning for the capacity crowd that turned up.

"I'm very sorry we didn't fulfill our promise by providing the venue and information (the neighbours) were expecting last night," he said.

Though much of the opposition to the recovery house has been marked by vitriol, area resident Jesse Miller is approaching the controversy with a little more nuance.

Miller said he's not worried for his safety or long-term resale value of his home if the recovery house goes ahead, but the district has badly botched the process and Turning Point has also failed to provide enough information.

Those spearheading the campaign to quash the proposal are [also not helping the matter by spreading incorrect information and fear, \(http://www.nsnews.com/news/neighbours-oppose-new-group-home-1.1762947\)](http://www.nsnews.com/news/neighbours-oppose-new-group-home-1.1762947) Miller said.

Someone at the meeting Thursday was handing out pamphlets warning of the dangers of homeless people, alcoholics, HIV patients, intravenous drug users and mentally unstable people living in the neighbourhood.

The list also included deaf, disabled and transgender people, though the last three were partially blacked out.

"It's absolutely atrocious. The entire thing should be blacked out and shredded. It's nothing but prejudicial hate and on a topic the person has almost zero understanding of," Miller said. "We're at a stage where the rest of the Lower Mainland is looking at our block and saying 'What a bunch of elitists.'"

While he still has a list of concerns, including where the Turning Point clients are coming from, whether they are there by court order and what it could mean for people wanting to sell their homes in the short term, Miller says he's not outright against the project.

"My mind's not made up on this," he said.

Miller said the perceived threat posed by the house could have an impact on the tight-knit community even if it turns out those fears are not founded on real information.

Miller said he wouldn't look forward to seeing the moms he knows "watching their children closer due to the fact there's nine men down the street.

"I personally don't care that there's nine men down the street because the neighbour next door to me could be the scary guy," he said.

The District of North Vancouver is aiming to hold another public meeting in a much larger venue, in early March.

Miller said the next meeting should be limited to the neighbours in the affected area, and not include advocates from around the Lower Mainland, many of whom showed up to Thursday's fiasco. That's not going to happen, MacKay-Dunn said, as the community needs to hear from people who have expertise in addictions.

"This is a much larger issue. The issue is about support recovery. It affects all of us," he said. "I think we'd be doing people a disservice if we didn't allow these individuals to come to the meetings and speak."

MacKay-Dunn said he wants Seymour residents to learn about Turning Point's plan from them and not disinformation spreading around Seymour.

"I'm not going to force this down anybody's throat. I believe once the information's out there, that people may change they're minds. We'll see," he said.