

6/30/15

Dear Kane County,

This letter is to serve as my expert opinion related to the possible concerns that the Kane County Board may have in regards to the Special Use application for the proposed alcoholism and substance abuse treatment facility at the former Glenwood School for Boys property, located in unincorporated Kane County. I have included my bio as a point of reference to you and the community as to my experience in the addiction treatment field.

I think it is important to state up front that I have no personal interest, financial or otherwise, in the proposed project. I do however, have 38 years of professional experience operating and helping others operate treatment facilities throughout the United States and abroad.

The following are my responses to the possible concerns that may be raised by your Board and or neighbors in the surrounding area:

***I. Based upon your experience, to what extent is it likely that patients at this facility will leave the facility, or "escape", and go into the neighborhood in the vicinity?***

In my experience, incomplete stays and more specifically AWOL discharges are very rare in programs such as this. Treatment providers that deal primarily with self-pay or insurance pay clients, particularly in the mid-to-high end market serve a population that tends to be very motivated for help and therefore are very likely to complete the program successfully. If a patient does choose to leave the program prematurely they tend to call a family member or cab to take them home. It is my understanding that the proposed project will be providing a private car service to all patients who voluntarily or involuntarily discharged from the facility in order to further mitigate this concern.

***A. What steps should be undertaken by the developer and/or the County, to prevent such "escapes"?***

The treatment facility should conduct a pre-admission screening on all prospective clients prior to them coming to the facility to ensure that all participants meet their admissions criteria. This bio-psychosocial screening/gate-keeping interview generally is conducted by phone with the client and/or their family member prior to them being accepted into the program. There would be another line of screening that occurs when the Individual arrives to ensure that they are in fact medically and psychologically stable and able to meet the program requirements.

The program will have conflict resolution processes in place to address issues long before they occur and will, I'm sure, have strict policies prohibiting patients from leaving the facility unaccompanied by a staff member. In addition, Maxxam Partners has informed me that they will be integrating thermal cameras around the property and create a virtual fence that will be monitored constantly by a third party off site. This far exceeds security measures I have seen in any other privately funded treatment facility in the country.

***B. What kinds of negative behavior could the County expect to occur from patients leaving AWOL from the facility?***

Although this issue comes up frequently when communities are voicing their concerns about a treatment facility coming to their neighborhood, in all my years of experience in the treatment field I have found that this is not an issue that ever plays out in reality. Most treatment facilities have strict policies prohibiting patients from leaving the facility without staff supervision while they are enrolled in their program. If someone does choose to leave the program, staff should and would make every effort to help the individual get to the next appropriate level of care or help them get home if they chose not to go to another program. As mentioned, the proposed facility will be providing a private car service to all patients voluntarily and involuntarily discharged from the facility in order to further mitigate this concern.



the retreat

**II. *To what extent will the presence of the facility as described affect the reputation of the neighborhood and the municipality as a whole in the vicinity of the facility?***

A quality treatment facility will enhance the reputation of a community. The Retreat has an 80-bed campus located on a 22-acre Big Woods parcel of land in the midst of the Wayzata community and has been since 2004 embraced with pride by our local community members. We have become a primary resource for community members needing help with addiction related matters. It didn't hurt to be featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show years ago as a place she chose to send someone who needed help.

**III. *What concerns should the County have relative to this facility, which has not been mentioned above?***

Although I empathize with the concerns most communities raise about having treatment facilities in their neighborhoods, I can say with some authority that their fears will not play out in reality. A well-run treatment program is committed to raising the social norms on their campus to ensure that all participants are behaving in a sober, responsible and dignified manner. They are the solution to one of our countries most difficult and costly problems. At least half of all members of your community know someone intimately who suffers from addiction. This project, like The Retreat in Minnesota, and Hazelden Foundation in Chicago and Minnesota experienced, will ultimately become the first call for help by your community members when one of their family members needs help.

Sincerely,

John H. Curtiss  
President/CEO  
The Retreat  
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Wayzata, MN 55391

# The Retreat

## **John H. Curtiss, MA, LADC, NCRS**

John is President of the Community of Recovering People board of directors and of The Retreat. He has been a member of the CORP board since its inception in 1991, and is one of the principle designers of The Retreat model of care. Prior to beginning his employment with CORP in April 1998, John was employed by the Hazelden Foundation for over 19 years. In his years at Hazelden, John served in a variety of roles, including; Vice President of Hazelden's National Continuum, Executive Director of Hazelden's Outreach Services, Executive Director of Fellowship Club, Hazelden's intermediate care facility in St. Paul, MN, Unit Supervisor of two of Hazelden's primary treatment units and as a chemical dependency counselor. John was also an instructor in Hazelden's professional education program, teaching group therapy, advanced counseling skills and the treatment of special populations.

John has a Masters Degree in Human and Health Services Administration from the College of Saint Mary's, he's a graduate of Hazelden's Counselor Training Program. He is a licensed counselor in the State of Minnesota and is a Nationally Certified Recovery Specialist.

John has served on numerous boards, including; Community of Recovering People, Sobriety High School, he is the past President of the Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs of North America (AHHAP) and is the founder of the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes (MASH) Opportunity Neighborhood Development Corporation. He has served as a guest faculty for Rutgers Summer School for Advanced Addiction Studies and is the author of a Hazelden publication titled "Letting Go". He is co-author of "A Caring Community, The Story of The Retreat", to be published December 2013.

John has dedicated his life to the creation of affordable accessible recovery communities throughout the United States and many other countries. He led the efforts to set up Hazelden's treatment continuum in New York City, Chicago and their Intermediate care program in West Palm Beach Florida.

The Retreat model of recovery is rapidly becoming a national standard for a non-clinical, spiritually-grounded, affordable approach to helping people access recovery from alcohol and drug dependency. The Retreat has captured the hearts of recovering alcoholics and professionals throughout the country. It has gained a reputation, not only as an affordable, effective approach to helping people recover, but as a great place for alcoholics in recovery to be of service to others. John has consulted with many individuals (in Hong Kong, Beijing, Russia, Ireland, England, New Zealand, Brazil and in many cities in the US) interested in replicating The Retreat and the Retreat Residence models in their community.

In his work with the Association of Halfway House Alcoholism Programs of North America John has worked tirelessly to promote the development of quality halfway house and sober-living environments in the Twin Cities, throughout the United States and in many other countries.