

Town of Leyden, MA

Planning Board

Minutes of Meeting: 7/25/19

Public Hearing for Angel's Rest (Application #19-01 dated 6/17/19)

Attendees: Rob Snedeker, Art Baker, Bob Snow, Warren Facey, David Curtis

Absent:

Call To Order: Meeting was called to order @ 7:02pm by Chairman Rob Snedeker.

Public Hearing: Approximately 50 attendees. Chairman Snedeker gave a brief introduction of the board and gave ground rules for the public hearing. He introduced Bill Parsons of the Odyssey Behavioral Healthcare who gave a description of the center. Bill said the goal of the center will be to stop gaming for the 18-25-year-old men who have become addicted to gaming whereby they spend 16-20 hours gaming. Requesting an extension of the current Angel's Rest special permit issued in 2003.

Bill introduced Vicky Smith as the chief marketing officer for Odyssey. She gave 3 points that are important to their company:

1. Small company committed to growing responsibly
2. Unique as they are highly selective on who they partner with and who they hire
3. Scott founder of Odyssey – create centers superior care that use evidence-based practices to give positive to change to help them and their families.

Dr. Greenfield was introduced by Vicky. Sexual medicine and process medicine teaching other doctors is his specialty. The doctors look to Dr. Greenfield for advice on helping people. He wrote a book in the 90's that indicated the gaming addiction problems we would have with the technology advances that he knew were forthcoming. He has been on numerous TV shows including Dr. Oz and written several articles.

Denise Paul of Farmington, CT was introduced as a mom of a patient. David & Daniel husband and son who was addicted to gaming and helped by Dr. Greenfield. Denise went into how her normal family like everyone else. Stonehill college recruited Daniel for baseball and was very accomplished in 2017 as a baseball player. 22-year-old recovery for gaming in treatment now with Dr. Greenfield. This happened within 6 months from getting accepted to Stonehill. He has a very high IQ, dropped out, moved home and was not into drugs or drinking. He was unable to work or function daily. They went to numerous doctors including psychiatrists, but no one could help them. Denise found Odyssey on line while trying to find solutions for her son. One treatment program in US that specialized in this epidemic. It was on the west coast, Washington (10 years center) for months of treatment with no insurance. All of these men were good young men who had just lost their way with the gaming addiction. Their son fell back into love with life through the program that Odyssey put him through. He then transitioned to Dr. Greenfield and has started working again and is attending college again.

Dr. Greenfield then gave a much more detailed description of his accomplishments and experience with the internet and technology addiction. 1,000's of emails and calls a year from addicted gamers and their families. He then gave the presentation which included a video of a cured patient. He has been operating an outpatient center for 22 years but started the private away centers with Odyssey 3 years ago by combining resources. They are not anti-gaming. They are anti-addicted to gaming. 150-180

million gamers of which 1% (1.5M-1.8M) become addicted. Muscle atrophy is a common result of gaming addiction.

Dr. Greenfield turned it back over to Bill Parsons who gave a description of the actual program and uses of the property including a chart comparing what happens now at Angels's Rest versus how it will be utilized with the Greenfield Center.

Questions from the public:

1. Attendees on Medicine? some and they will be administered at the offices at 55 Mid County
2. Length of Stay – 45-90 days average depending on response to treatment
3. If they decide they don't want to attend what assurances can you give to make sure they don't escape and end up on my doorstep? – no assurances but that has never happened
4. How many attendees at a time – 5 to start and grow to maximum of 30 in 2.5 to 3 years.
5. Insurance – not currently, but United Nations World Health declared a medical disorder so in the future possibly
6. What stage of therapy do they attend retreat? – Culture shock, irritability, anxiousness? Detox period doesn't last more than a couple days unlike alcohol or opioids.
7. Screening of kids? – There will be co-occurring treatment attendees ; no psychiatric attendees. Most are A.D.D.
8. Staffing ratio? – Program director, recreational therapists, coaches, yoga therapists, art therapists, music therapists, Voluntary program and will not be locked in to the buildings and don't need to be locked into the building.
9. What will they do if the attendees don't like the smell of the farm? They envision a partnership with the farms to have a work program.
10. How will they interact with children as they have read they may be addicted to pornography? They will generally be on the grounds but if they do leave the grounds for programs they will be supervised. They will have "free" time but it has to be on the grounds. If there are disruptive attendees, they will be asked to leave. There may be attendees who have looked at pornography but that is not the primary reason they will attend. The primary reason is too much gaming.
11. Any experience of violence in the program? Dr. Greenfield has treated over 2,000 and never had a serious case of violence. There have been temper tantrums.
12. Where else have you looked to locate the facility? Lenox, Hadley, Pittsfield, Springfield
13. How often will Dr. Greenfield be there, concerned it is unchartered territory and attendees will escape late at night? More in the beginning to train staff and make sure they know what they are doing. There have been some that wondered off but Police in Bellevue Washington program was asked about problems with the attendees and the answer was no.
14. What type of medications? ADD or ADHH. Ritalin yes. Chief pointed out that people kill themselves on this medication.
15. Alcohol allowed, Angels Rest is no Angel with noise and roamers? No including staff!
16. Once 30 attendees is reached, what to do with overflow? No game plan for more than 30. They would be sent to other facilities that they are currently seeking locations for.
17. Comment: I am hearing a lot of negative comments. These are children that need help and are somebodies' kid. They need help and we have an organization that is prepared to do that. I don't believe these are the type of kids that are going to escape and cause harm.

18. Comment: I believe Leyden is a perfect place for these kids to re-connect with life. It is a perfect place to see and talk face to face and associate with people rather than being buried in their computer/phone. These kids are lost and I commend you for your work and effort to try to change these kids' lives positively forever.
19. When facility reaches 30, what are your plans to permit the drinking water and wastewater treatment? – If and when they get there they will address the requirements needed by permit.
20. Can you accommodate a tighter security? Yes on cameras and ADT security system on doors & windows.
21. Comment: I worked at New Hope Academy for many years and in the profession for 30 years. These boys value their brains and once they re-learn that they become good functioning citizens. There were some that left the program (3 in 10 years). They alarmed the doors and the attendees knew that. They will be crabby to start but in the right environment they know this is different once they get there. She had many rewarding attendees tell her that she changed their life and without the center would be completely lost. This town is magic, and we have an opportunity to share that and provide a positive influence to these kids.
22. Is there a current plan for security fence on property line? No
23. Is the gaming recognized in DSM? Provisionally.
24. Comment: Mass Health is not taken so from a social aspect I want to make sure there are many that are not left out because they don't have the money to attend. I also want to make sure the presentation is included in the record.
25. Concerned about additional calls to police, fire, etc., I ask the Planning Board - Can any restrictions be put on the permit? Keep 5 kids for 1st year? Then reevaluate? Don't believe permit should be granted not knowing what type of growth will be seen. Recent Canada violence from video gaming, not sure it fits into our community as a right to farm community. Very concerned about screening process. Can a violent attendee get by the check.
26. 2015-now acquisition and expanded partnerships. How does the company function? Who are the owners and is it an overriding corporation? Nautic and Odyssey founder recapitalized with new partner for financial benefits. Odyssey owns and operate the locations. They do lease some facilities but want to own the Leyden property. Current growth is 1 facility per year.
27. Can we look at financial statements? Because it is a private company, I don't believe so. However, if we weren't financially sound, we wouldn't be looking at new facilities.
28. Pornography addiction will be treated on Odysee website but was removed, why was it taken down? Bill took it down because they will only be focusing on gaming and although they may have looked at pornography that is not the primary addiction.
29. There is a case in FL where a 29 year old, Grant Amato was addicted to a cam site where he stole a lot of money? Dr. Greenfield was not aware of this case but understands that bad things can happen but there is not a direct correlation between gaming and violence, it is a very small percentage that cause harm.
30. People from Angels Rest have ended up on my property (Facey property) and we are not against the proposal but Are your other facilities in residential neighborhoods and what type of securities will you have? Security system is doable and relatively easy to put in.
31. When did Dr. Greenfield start communicating with Odyssey? About 13 months ago.
32. When did Odyssey recognize Leyden? May 2019
33. What is the maximum number of attendees?

34. Boys only? Dr. Greenfield said in his 20 years he has never treated a female for a gaming addiction. Likelihood
35. What is program cost? Still figuring out economics but around \$600/day.
36. Taxes? Currently about \$11,000 per year for both facilities according to Jennifer.
37. What is maximum for current septic and water system? 25, it will be a business decision when that time comes.
38. Comment: I am an employee at Angles Rest and we have 24 beds that people can rent for a weekend or a week with no scanning process. So I think the proposal is actually more secure than what we have now.
39. Why didn't the Planning Board notify the older people that are not at this meeting? The Planning Board posted a legal notice and notified abutters. The town also put it on the website and the sign board on Greenfield Road. There are over 50 attendees.
40. Comment: At \$600/day you are only offering this program to an exclusive group of attendees. Why can't you make it more affordable? We are actively pursuing insurance options and other options to expand the offering.
41. How does the 155 Mid County Road property work into this? This property is Jennifer's home and will be utilized for office space because there is not a good administration office for private meetings at the North County Road property.
42. Comment: Welcome Odyssey. I have a daughter that is 26 and has been struggling with addiction since she was 16. I support this positive program and thank you for your application and I highly value what you are trying to do.

Michelle Giarusso then read 3 letters that were addressed to the Planning Board, but writers asked that Michelle read them. Michelle then asked that they consider several things including many things that were already discussed including traffic, septic system, etc. and said that they will need 4 wheel drive not vans. The residents will have to deal with the decision the Planning Board makes and the Planning Board will have to live with those results as well. The harmony of the community should not be affected according to state regulations and this should be considered by the Board.

No further questions were proposed on the floor so Chairman Snedeker ended the meeting but no motions were made to close the public hearing.

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 @ 7:00pm.

Adjournment: A motion was made by Bob and seconded by David to adjourn the public hearing at 9:47pm and a unanimous affirmative vote followed.

Respectively Submitted, Art Baker, Clerk