

Dear Fellow Park Tower Owner,

I have a sister who has mentally disabled. I love her dearly and help take care of her. But, I would be the last one to suggest that she live at Park Tower. It wouldn't be fair to her or to the residents here.

That's why I'm writing you now to clarify the issues surrounding Home First Illinois and management's unfortunate responses to a board meeting on the subject.

Home First Illinois (HFI) is a taxpayer funded program intended to provide housing "for very low-income people with disabilities."

<http://www.iff.org/resources/content/2/4/documents/HFI%20Overview.pdf>

The goal is highly commendable but like many well-intended state programs, this one has run amuck.

How so? Well, let's focus on the purchase of six condos by HFI at Park Tower.

The program probably was not intended to buy condominiums in an up-scale high-rise like Park Tower. Here's what Governor Quinn said in announcing the funding of HFI in 2011: "The purchase of distressed properties will help communities grow stronger." And: "This program also will help Illinois' economy by turning vacant housing into attractive, accessible units."

<http://www3.illinois.gov/PressReleases/ShowPressRelease.cfm?SubjectID=1&RecNum=9928>

Park Tower is distressed? Really?

Nor, one would suspect, was the program intended to spend \$106,750 per single housing unit -- that's the average price HFI paid at Park Tower -- when condos are going for less than half the amount in other buildings. That doesn't appear to be a very wise use of taxpayer dollars.

What complicates the discussion is the definition of the term "disability" that HFI broadens to include mental illness. To provide accessible housing and independent living for those who are physically disabled is more than just a lofty goal. It is a moral obligation that all of us in society share.

To include the "mentally disabled" in that mix, however, is unfair. It is unfair to the patients and it is unfair to those living around them. Close living quarters like those in a high-rise condominium offer little protection for greatly varying behavior and lifestyles. There is little tolerance for screaming, banging on walls, uncontrollable laughter, loud music, and other inappropriate behavior at all hours of the day and night. Bizarre behavior in the elevator, lobby and other common areas leave fellow residents uncomfortable and even threatened. It is not what they bargained for when they purchased their expensive condos here.

Park Tower should not be allowed to become a half-way house for the mentally ill.

Nor should Park Tower be allowed to become an apartment building. One of the governor's stated goals in funding HFI was to make "communities grow stronger" but adding six rental units to Park Tower only weakens our property values and adversely impacts the quality of life here. More than 30% of the units at Park Tower are rentals (40% of the residents are renters). Such a high percentage threatens to turn our building into a large rental complex that typically is shunned by would-be buyers who want to occupy the property they purchase.

Compounding the problem at Park Tower is the association's Declaration that bans the use of units by any entity for any purpose "of any kind, commercial, religious, educational, or otherwise, designed for profit, *altruism*, exploration, or otherwise ...". The use of Park Tower by an altruistic organization like HFI, therefore, might be a violation of Park Tower's governing document. (Park Tower already is embroiled in a lawsuit for violating a use clause of the Declaration.)

These were the discussion points raised at the April Park Tower Board of Directors meeting. These are the kind of matters that need to be raised by a board that takes seriously its fiduciary responsibilities to the association and its owners.

The points raised by board members Betty Terry-Lundy and Tom Wartowski, an attorney, were specific:

- 1.) Why was the board not made aware of HFI's intent to house mentally ill residents?
- 2.) Had the association's attorney addressed the question of the declaration and provided a written opinion?

Discussion, however, was furthest from the minds of the other board members.

Board Treasurer David Nicosia called any discussion about the matter "racist."

George Pauley turned red-faced and said he was insulted by the discussion.

Operations Manager Tim Patricio opined that the board might be sued for discrimination for having the discussion.

Why did an intelligent discussion on a serious issue turn ugly?

What was the uproar about?

Why did Tim Patricio follow up with a lengthy article in the association's newsletter that was sent to hundreds of owners who were unaware of the issue and didn't have the advantage of hearing the original questions? Why did he, like Nicosia and Pauley, distort and mischaracterize the discussion?

I don't know.

But with feigned indignation and their heads in the sand they face the threat of finding the association in the middle of another lawsuit as Park Tower crumbles around them.

I thought you'd like to hear another side to this issue.

Respectfully,



Don Yuratovac / Unit 4102