

Affordable Housing and Group Homes in Lincoln, 2009 Research and Outreach

While notifying residents or neighbors about specific houses being considered for group homes in Lincoln would likely violate Fair Housing Laws and the Massachusetts Antidiscrimination Law¹, over the past few years multiple venues have been used to inform, seek input, and vet the issue in general before investing town dollars.

- **“Housing Troika” formed.** In October 2007, the three existing affordable housing entities in town – the Housing Commission, the Affordable Housing Trust, and the Lincoln Foundation – begin periodic joint meetings as the “Troika.” Together, the three entities have 15 members.
- **16 Troika meetings.** The Troika meets 16 times between October 2007 and January 2009.
- **Presentations to Selectmen.** Consideration of group homes is presented at Selectman’s meetings on April 14 and June 9 in 2008 by Troika members.
- **Presentation to Town Meeting.** Investment in group homes as an affordable housing strategy is presented at the March 2008 Town Meeting by the Housing Commission.
- **Due diligence conducted on three group home entities.** In 2008, Troika members conduct due diligence on three housing entities: interviewing references, talking to towns with experience in group homes and these management entities in particular, reviewing financials, interviewing staff, and visiting current homes owned by entities. Two of these entities – CMARC and The Edinburg Center – purchase homes in Lincoln.
- ***Lincoln Journal* covers group homes 6 times in 2008.** Beginning in December 2006, the *Lincoln Journal* covers the issue of group homes qualifying for affordable housing in Lincoln. There are six articles or letters mentioning affordable group homes in 2008 alone.
- **“Group Homes in Lincoln” is detailed on town website, lincolntown.org.** In June of 2008, the Troika places links in two places (on the main page, and on the Housing Commission page) to provide background and answer questions about Lincoln’s potential involvement in a group home.
- **24 hours of research to answer request for information.** In response to a Freedom of Information Act request for information on how the Troika members decided to invest in a group home, a volunteer in town spends 24 hours collecting over 1600 pages of documentation and over 1100 emails.
- **Open Forum held.** On June 12, 2008, the Troika hosts an Open Forum on group homes in Lincoln. Representatives from CMARC and The Edinburg Center present at the Forum.
- **Edinburg, CMARC hold Open Houses in their Lincoln group homes.** After the purchase of a group home in Lincoln, Edinburg and CMARC each notified nearby neighbors of their purchase and the use and management of the group home. Edinburg held an Open House in June 2008 and CMARC in February 2009.

¹ Letter from town counsel under “Answers to Neighborhood Questions regarding Group Homes” on lincolntown.org.