

## **AIDS Services vs. the Town of Gilsum** *September 29, 2008*

Posted by *gilsumgrapevine* in Uncategorized.  
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Here's a good place to begin — the Concord Monitor's 9-28-08 Sunday edition story (thanks, Bruce, for sending this link):

<http://www.concordmonitor.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080928/FRONTPAGE/809280332>

Read it yourself for an overview of events to date.

Here's one of the things I find alarming: so far, the Town of Gilsum has spent a minimum of **\$7000** on legal fees on their lawsuit against AIDS Services ... and that's just the beginning. That's our tax money, folks, and it's going to be many thousands more before the dust settles.

And WHY is the town bringing suit? They claim previous violations of the regulations ... but everyone seems to agree that the Wellness House is now in compliance with the regulations (the legality of which, of course, is the subject of the suit *against* the town. More legal fees, thank you).

Now get this: in January of 2008, a letter from the Selectboard of Gilsum (minus Louise Cook, who did not sign), written by the town's attorney, asked the Sheriff and County Attorney to investigate bringing criminal charges against AIDS Services of the Monadnock Region for violating the zoning variance at the Wellness House.

In March, after investigating, the County Attorney deemed there was **NO** evidence to support a criminal case against ASMR.

In April, the frustrated Selectboard then brought a civil lawsuit against ASMR, requesting an expedited hearing and damages because of the "danger" to the town. A hearing was held on June 13. The judge's decision was rendered on July 2 — ASMR is NOT considered a menace, and no reason is found to bring punitive measures in advance of the civil trial.

So, if after two investigations and two legal decisions showing that there is no basis for criminal complaint or evidence of danger to the town — WHY is the Board of Selectmen spending our tax dollars to continue to fight and punish ASMR?

There are lots of other threads to tease out of this situation.

It's clear that opposition to the Wellness House was spearheaded from the start by our present Selectman Ray Britton and his wife Alison. According to the Monitor article, they immediately began circulating a petition as soon as they learned of the agency's interest in purchasing the property. And Alison Britton has been served with a "Notice of No Trespassing" — on file at the Sheriff's office — citing her "ongoing threatening, verbally assaulting, inappropriate behavior as exhibited toward this agency and its staff, clients and Board members, including residents of Wellness House."

Hmmmm. More later.

### **Comments**»



[1.](#) Scott - September 29, 2008

Can we impeach our selectboard or make them personally responsible for the cost of THEIR

personal vendetta??



2. Scott - September 29, 2008

Can we force the Selectmen to pay for their own private battle with AIDS Services?



3. gilsumgrapevine - September 30, 2008

In response to Scott –

My understanding is that there is no provision in state statutes for removing selectmen, other than elections. If I'm wrong and someone can correct me, please do!

Mr. Hasbrouck has indicated, in writing, that the civil suit is in response to the “complaints” of a number of “irate citizens” who, he says, have voiced their opinions to him.

Perhaps if enough people were outraged about the way the Selectboard is spending our tax money on this civil suit, and communicated their opinions — phone calls? letters? a petition? — the Selectboard would at least be put on notice that not everyone is in favor of their actions.

And perhaps it should be considered that the Zoning Board had a hand in creating this situation. If indeed the restrictions placed on Wellness House are in violation of the state constitution, leading to this lawsuit against the town, will the members of that board be held accountable if the court decides in favor of ASMR?

And let's get back to that initial point of elections. If we really want to change the status quo, we have to figure out how to make that happen. I'm of the opinion that most Gilsum voters need to be much more well-informed about how our town officials have conducted themselves. Thus this forum ...