

Re: Oversight leads to legal dispute between Bernardsville neighbors
By Charlie Zavalick, Editor; Dated: Feb 26, 2023

Dear Editor,

I read your article with great interest and shared it amongst my peers in the Somerset and Morris communities, all being individuals that have experienced or been affected by substance use as well as participating members of AA, NA, AL-Anon, etc.

I am advocate, coach, volunteer, and consultant in the recovery field, so I am intimately familiar with the type of support services provided by the Community Peer Recovery Centers in each of New Jersey's 21 counties operating under grants from DHMAS with Community in Crisis (CIC) being the designated Peer Recovery Center for all of Somerset County.

Unfortunately, I am also intimately familiar with the stigma, shame and discrimination associated with substance use and recovery. Your article describes the technicalities of a lawsuit between two neighboring commercial entities, that stem from an apparent Planning Board oversight, however, reading between the lines, it is possible that a more ominous, underlying intention is exploiting a clerical tax-address error. Afterall, the location is a relatively busy street, with a church opposite, commercial entities, a bank and Bernardsville High School within 50 yards.

Furthermore, you highlight the irony with CiC recently purchasing the property from Galloway & Crane at market value, but the irony goes deeper. Originally, both properties were residential and at some point, re-zoned commercial to permit a funeral home business. Yet, it is ironic that the current complaint is based on residential concerns from the same commercial entity. Perhaps the largest irony of all, is that a former for-profit funeral business is stalling the efforts of a non-profit organization from saving lives through prevention, education, and recovery support, both being vital community services.

I submit this letter to the editor on behalf my many peers and clients that are contributing community members, business owners, government employees, taxpayers, and voting constituents. I hope that this opinion will receive your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

*David Martinak, Founder
Noble Advocacy Alliance
Washington Avenue, Morristown, NJ 07960*

Dear Editor,

In response to your article in last week's edition regarding the lawsuit between Galloway & Crane Funeral Home, the Borough of Bernardsville, and Community in Crisis (CIC), I wanted to express my support for CIC and the incredible work that they do, in particular for youth in this community. Two of my kids have been lucky enough to attend some of their youth community service programs and have become better educated and aware about the dangers of using drugs and, especially, about the alarming prevalence of fentanyl. Through the organization, my son and I hand delivered supplies to Great Expectations, a safe place for pregnant women and their young children.

I honestly believe that CIC is leading the way in being able to reach and resonate with our kids through the programs they do: we're so fortunate to have a community gem like this in our midst.

As the demand for programming like this grows – which you know they will, given the explosion of vaping among youth and the legalization of marijuana - CIC will surely need this space to continue and expand the programming they do. And what's not lost on me is the realization that this building, which was once a place for many people to gather in grief, will now be a place for people to gather and heal and live. If the town's oversight has triggered this lawsuit, it seems unfair and, frankly, wrong to cause unnecessary disruption and delays to a charitable organization doing God's work.

Sincerely,

Kerry Testa

Grove Rd, Basking Ridge.

Dear Editor,

I am on the finance committee and board of trustees at Community in Crisis and need to urge the parties involved in the lawsuit featured in last week's paper to understand the critical role Community in Crisis plays in supporting people in our Somerset Hills area. Whether it's recovery support programs that literally offer a lifeline of care, tools and resources to help individuals maintain sobriety, an older adult with chronic pain struggling with opioid dependence, or a family in need of free clinical counseling to help them navigate a loved one's struggles, this organization steps up and helps.

As a volunteer for CIC, I see firsthand how its outreach has expanded in the wake of the pandemic. Last year alone, overdose deaths reached an all-time high on record of 107,000 loved ones - moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. I hear at board meetings how CIC has become a trusted ally of the school districts in its education of substance misuse, delivering presentations, workshops and in-school programming. And I hear community residents when they say that CIC is the reason their son or daughter is at the family dinner table each night instead of being another tragic statistic.

Forward-thinking angel investors made this transformational gift to CIC knowing that this added space was critical for the wellbeing of our community. Much time, money and commitment have already been invested in this project – let's see it completed and used for the good of us all.

Sincerely,

Laurie Wolfe

Tuxford Terrace

[Basking Ridge NJ.](#)