

**Group Home Told To Move Because Of Sex Offenders**  
**News**

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SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) - A Springfield house serving as a group home for sex offenders has 30 days to move or disband, according to a letter from the city sent to the chaplain who runs the Crestview Street home.



The director of building development services wrote that the house acts more as a "community corrections facility" than a group home.

"The type of facility you appear to be operating is allowed only in the city's Heavy Manufacturing zoning district," wrote Chris Straw.

The home at 1809 E. Crestview St., operated by Recovery Chapel, was featured in Amos Bridges' Ask the Watchdog column in the News-Leader on March 4. Neighbors have expressed concerns about the facility and questioned whether it should be allowed in a residential neighborhood.

Four days later, Springfield City Council directed staff to study the rules governing group homes with particular attention toward the housing of multiple sex offenders.

The Rev. Farris Robertson, who runs Recovery Chapel, said he intends to appeal the city's decision and, if necessary, fight it in federal court.

Robertson did not say whether he would try to comply with the city's requests in the interim.

"My plan is to work with the city as long as they allow me to," Robertson said.

"We serve God and the community of Springfield. Would the community have me throw a sex offender onto the street? Would they have me throw alcoholics and drug addicts out on the street?"

In his letter, Straw said any house in which more than one person is on probation or parole could be considered a community corrections facility.

Records with the Greene County Sheriff's Office indicate as many as eight registered sex offenders had lived there at one time, but Robertson said the figure was five.

Robertson has described the Crestview Street home as a halfway house for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, some of whom happen to be sex offenders.

He said the men housed there qualify as disabled due to their addictions, arguing the use of the home is protected by federal law.

In his letter to Robertson, Straw disagreed, stating that he did not interpret sex offenders as being a protected class under fair housing laws.

Straw warned that the home must be brought into compliance.

âYou also have the option of relocating your operation to an area within Springfield that is zoned âHeavy Manufacturingâ or elsewhere beyond the city limits.â

Robertson said he believed the city was discriminating against the facility because of the emotional complaints expressed by parents in the neighborhood.

âOur men in this supervised setting are less dangerous to the public than in an unsupervised setting,â Roberston said.

âWe do a good job for the city.â