

Thursday, August 3, 2023

Washoe County Board of Adjustment,

Safe Embrace has bravely served victim-survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Washoe County for over 20 years providing lifesaving services and advocacy. One of the most vital services they offer is emergency shelter for those needing to flee their home. The Safe Embrace shelter allows victim-survivors a safe place to heal, keep themselves and their children safe, and build the foundation for a safe future. Safe Embrace operates one of only two shelters in Washoe County. In 2022 when Safe Embrace was confronted with the concerns and legal matters of running their shelter, they did not turn their backs on those in need. Rather, they reimagined what their advocacy looked like and stepped up to provide safe shelter in creative ways, challenging their staff and advocates in ways they have never navigated before.

Today we ask that this Board recognize the critical work and services that Safe Embrace provides this community and the necessity and vital need to maintain their shelter at full capacity. While they have managed to serve the community with limited shelter capacity, there is no doubt that many victim-survivors in Washoe have had to go without safe shelter, putting them at increased risk for violence. In just one 24-hour period in Nevada, 33 victim-survivors across the state did not have their request for services met. 70% of those unmet requests were for emergency shelter. <sup>1</sup> Knowing that Safe Embrace is the second largest program in Washoe County, we can speculate how this number has likely increased since 2022 and how many victim-survivors in our community went without critical safety.

Simply put, leaving an abusive partner is the most dangerous time for victim-survivors of domestic violence. <sup>2</sup> In a study of victim-survivors, when asked what they would do without access to safe shelter, they responded with five common concerns: <sup>3</sup>

- Be homeless.
- Lose everything – some described fears of losing their jobs and children, and others feared going to jail.

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<sup>1</sup> National Network to End Domestic Violence. 2022. Domestic Violence Counts Reports: Nevada Summary. Retrieved from: <https://nnev.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/17th-Annual-Domestic-Violence-Counts-Report-NV-Summary.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. *Why Do Victims Stay?* Retrieved from: <https://ncadv.org/why-do-victims-stay>

<sup>3</sup> Lyon, Eleanor, et al. 2008. *Meeting Survivors' Needs: A Multi-State Study of Domestic Violence Shelter Experiences, Final Report*. U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225025.pdf>

- Acts of desperation – some described fleeing their communities to another state for shelter, others shared that without shelter, they would potentially resort to violence themselves and would harm their abuser.
- Uncertainty – many shared that they honestly did not know what they would do without having access to shelter.
- Continued the abuse/risk of death.

Safe Embrace advocates work around the clock, ensuring that the shelter runs smoothly, safely and that residents are respectful neighbors. It is important to remember that those entering the shelter are our neighbors, colleagues, family members, and, most importantly, our community. Domestic and sexual violence do not discriminate and intimately affect every single one of our lives.

In a county that already has limited resources for victim-survivors, we encourage this Board to stand with victim-survivors and grant Safe Embrace their Special Use Permit to operate their shelter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Abdur-Raheem  
Executive Director  
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence  
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775.857.7022

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**From:** Alferd Knepper <alferdknepper@att.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 2, 2023 6:12 PM  
**To:** Albarran, Adriana  
**Subject:** Fw: Case Number WSUP22-19 (Safe Embrace)  
**Attachments:** 1995 Car parked in weeds July 2023.jpeg

[NOTICE: This message originated outside of Washoe County -- DO NOT CLICK on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

I was planning on attending the Board of Adjustment meeting tomorrow but due to health reasons and on my doctors advise, I won't be able to attend. I am sending this to comment at the public hearing for the Special Use Permit Case Number WSUP22-0019 (Safe Embrace).

My name is Tami Wittich and my husband and I own a home 2 doors down from 1995 Ponderosa Drive. We purchased the property as it was on a quiet, dead end, private street and we hoped to retire and make this our forever home. When we moved into the neighborhood we knew there was a group home but after checking into the zoning and coding on the property (it was E1 at that time) we figured a small group home was not an issue for us. However, when construction started we never got any notice of zoning changes or use permits. We were told that if any major changes were made to the property regarding zoning, etc. we would be notified. We were not and we were not happy with the outcome and have been fighting it ever since.

The house has changed over the years and the pictures included in the SUP do not accurately reflect the condition of the property. I have attached a picture I took a couple days ago of the east side of the front of the property. It was upsetting when they cut down all the trees on that side and it is now ever worse with the weeds growing and nothing being done about it. Not only is it unsightly but a tremendous fire risk parking a car on that dry brush. It is frustrating that Safe Embrace does nothing to make the property look like a neighborhood residence and when they do make a promise to maintain things, they never follow through and it gets even worse. It doesn't look like a neighborhood home, it looks like a commercial building and adding parking as noted on their permit will only make it look worse. They have no concern for the neighbors and many of the people who stay there have no concern for the property and are rude to the neighbors.

They destroyed our private road with all the construction and promised to fix it. That never happened and it forced the neighbors to try and get enough money together to at least do a fix on the road so we could drive on it. I had friends that refused to come to my house because they didn't want to drive down the road because it was so bad. Safe Embrace has done nothing to help the neighborhood and has only made it worse.

This "company" is not a good neighbor and should not be allowed in a residential neighborhood. The code violations should be enough to reject the Special Use Permit but the fact that they are destroying the look of our neighborhood and private property should tell the Board of Adjustment that this type of GROUP CARE FACILITY is not and should not be allowed in a single family, residential neighborhood. They operated for many years as a quiet group home and took care of the property. What they are doing now is atrocious and I don't think anyone would want it in their neighborhood either.

Thank you for your consideration of our feelings and we hope you take into consideration the county codes and requirements before approving this permit. The proposed use of the property is NOT permitted by your own codes in a single, family neighborhood and they should not be allowed to increase the number of people allowed to live there. 10 people (E1 zoning) is plenty for a residential building next to other homes and approving any more is not good for Ponderosa Drive or Washoe County.

Tami & Ryan Wittich  
2110 Ponderosa Drive  
Sparks, NV 89431

