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that by distinguishing between limited and general group care residences, the city may have created a dual and discriminatory system.

Opposition to group care facilities is being mobilized by Little City Hall managers and some neighborhood associations. In many cases, the criticisms are valid. Homes are clustered in some neighborhoods. Licensing, planning and oversight accountabilities are not well known. City residents feel that their neighborhoods are the dumping grounds for homes. Others are fed up with the state muscling them into accepting group care programs in the absence of community involvement --especially when city taxes are not paid.

Politics Questioned

But for others, the objections are not so reasonable and may in part be politically motivated. Fear of people with problems is an oft-heard issue. Proponents say that the middle- and upper-class new "urban gentry" of certain neighborhoods do not want "sick" or street-wise people for neighbors. Still others look askance at the leadership being offered by Kevin White's local political operatives and wonder if the upswing in opposition is a reflection of the mayor's preoccupation with his likely election opponent Joseph Timilty, the Mr. Neighborhood of Boston politics.

As for the city's official position, Human services coordinator Brian Fallon told the *Update* that no new general-type licenses will be granted until there is agreement on the following points: 1) group care residences must adhere to license provisions; 2) payments in lieu of taxes must be made; 3) community input must occur; and 4) there must be adequate review of program quality.

Regardless of the suspicians, this de-institutionalization crisis has been exacerbated by a near complete lack of leadership at all levels. The city has historically closed its eyes to group home proliferation. The Dukakis administration has not given off the impression that it is committed to group care. Private providers have never monitored themselves with regard to neighborhood impact. And to compound matters, the *Update* has learned that the state's mental health and rehabilitation agencies are now trying to make separate deals with the BRA which could jeapordize the chances for other agency-administered homes to be licensed.

New State Hiring Policy Effect Uncertain

Three weeks ago, state agencies received a memo from Administration and Finance detailing new hiring requirements. Implemented without warning, the procedure requires agencies to go through either A&F or the Division of Employment Security prior to advertising for help elsewhere. Initially, some commissioners hit the ceiling calling it everything from "a hidden attrition" to "a power grab by A&F."

The actual impact is unclear. A&F is not rigidly enforcing the regulation and agencies are more or less complying. As one human services official stated: "It could be a great service, but if they (A&F) want to be malicious by promoting attrition it could really screw things up."

Big Brother & The Computing Company

Can a state agency tread the fine line between its obligation to determine public assistance eligibility and invasion of privacy? The Welfare Department's proposal to check savings accounts statewide to determine if AFDC applicants and recipients have hidden assets puts it face to face with the question. Welfare Commissioner Alexander Sharp is trying to convince Banking Commissioner Carol Greenwald to cooperate in developing such a plan, but Greenwald is reluctant citing privacy considerations and questioning state authority to mandate bank cooperation.

In the legislature, Speaker Thomas McGee has engaged a computer expert to determine if a plan which guarantees privacy is feasible. Rep. Greg Sullivan, a proponent of the search, says a plan that would cross-check bank records by name, address and identification number is under consideration and that McGee will be cooperating in a pilot program soon. McGee aide Tim Taylor denied knowledge of the Speaker's role.

On the banking side, Mutual Bank of Newton President Keith Willoughby said that while he believes the state has a right to examine welfare recipient savings information, his bank would have to be certain the plan was not a "fishing expedition." He also said he doubted that a "safe" plan would be comprehensive enough to catch many cheaters.