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# Jeannette residents told trying to prevent facility for challenged adults could bring lawsuit

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**Jeannette** officials told Paruco Park residents this week that nothing that can be done to block the opening of a group home for mentally and physically challenged adults in their neighborhood.

Residents complained to council about the negative effect the home could have on their property values and asked if the house met all city zoning requirements.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen in that house when they move there,” said Lorraine Orange, who lives next door to the group home. “Yes, we have concerns. I see my property worth less and less.”

But City Attorney Scott Avolio said that under the federal Fair Housing Act, zoning has no bearing on the issue and there is nothing the city can do to stop the home from opening unless it wants to face a civil rights lawsuit.

“It’s a discrimination issue,” Avolio said.

Avolio said four adults will live at the Lewis Avenue home, which was purchased for \$178,000 last month by Community Options Inc. of New Jersey.

Bridget Haney, director of the organization’s Pittsburgh office, said the agency cares for and serves as an advocate for people with physical and mental disabilities and helps clients with employment.

“We’ll be bringing in revenue, providing jobs and using other local resources,” she said.

City building inspector Ed Howley said he has been in the house and said although it needs smoke detectors, a fire escape and emergency lighting to comply with building codes, it is in “very good shape.”

“I have the same concerns that residents have, but this federal act really ties the hands of the city as to what we can do there,” Howley said.

The same agency opened a group home in Greensburg last year without any controversy.

The company purchased that house in Greensburg for \$160,000.

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