

Plan for 118th Avenue massage parlour withdrawn

Proposed location too close to youth centre, outraged community argued

By Gordon Kent, Edmonton Journal April 5, 2013



Miri Peterson and Bryan LaFleche stand outside Crystal Kids - near where a massage parlour had been proposed. Crystal Kids had collected more than 12,000 names on an online petition opposed to the project.

Photograph by: [Greg Southam, file](#) , Edmonton Journal

EDMONTON - The woman who outraged people around 118th Avenue by seeking to open a massage parlour near a youth centre has dropped the proposal.

Ha Yung Tso visited the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board office Friday to withdraw her appeal, said Sheila McDonald, acting director of tribunal and civic agency governance.

She didn't give a reason, but must wait six months before she can submit the same application and would then have to go through the same approval process, McDonald said.

“We recommended she speak to the Alberta Avenue Business Association to try to find some business opportunity for herself or some other business to go into that site.”

More than two dozen people crowded into a hearing Thursday to oppose her plans to run the business at 8706 118th Ave., two doors away from Crystal Kids.

They argued the facility would put children using the drop-in centre at risk and harm a revitalizing area where the city has spent millions of dollars upgrading streets and fighting the sex trade, including signs telling johns to stay away.

Crystal Kids has also collected more than 12,000 names on an online petition opposed to the project.

A development officer turned down the scheme because there isn't enough off-street parking and no loading zone or bicycle parking, but Tso appealed that decision in March.

However, the hearing was postponed to May 2 after Tso's interpreter Simon Shum, 55, was arrested in the board's waiting room on an unrelated charge of living on the avails of prostitution.

He was charged as part of a police investigation into human trafficking. Tso, who speaks little English, later denied “100 per cent” that her facility would involve sex.

Norm Aldi, president of the Eastwood Community League, said she was “irate” at suspicions she's involved in the sex trade, but confirmed she dropped the idea of setting up a massage parlour because of the community pressure.

He said he's helping the Hong Kong native find a tenant or start a store in the building, which she bought from Shum.

“She's quite innocent ... She has a number of certificates in massage and she thought it was going to be on the level,” he said.

“There are people looking for spots on this avenue every day. She herself will maybe open a business — clothing, flowers, something like that.”

Bryan LaFleche, president of Crystal Kids, said Tso's decision is good news.

“As soon as a more wholesome business opens up there, that would be fabulous for us. If that's what she's looking to do, we would be all in favour,” he said.

“As much as we don't want unsavory businesses on the avenue, we don't want empty buildings either.”

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