

Butterworth's service outreach in the Belknap neighborhood raises questions of power and autonomy

"We believe that Dorothy Munson through Butterworth Community Interaction has come into the neighborhood and through manipulation and deceit has taken over the Neighborhood Association. Up to this time the only way the neighbors had to be empowered to deal with the city and other big corporations expressing an interest in the neighborhood, was through the Neighborhood Association. Now that the NOBL Board has been taken over by a pro-Butterworth sentiment, where is the residents' vehicle for voicing their opinion?"

- NOBL (Neighbors Of Belknap Lookout) board member Deborah Kales, in a letter to Nick Garza of the Grand Rapids Neighborhood Services Dept.

"There is no problem."

- Faith Kent, current NOBL board chairperson

Frank Lynn, NOBL's long-time executive director until resigning this Spring, first suggested to me there might be a connection between the politicking behind the Butterworth-Blodgett merger and what many consider a takeover of NOBL by Butterworth.

Is the Butterworth-Blodgett merger related to greater expansion in Belknap by Butterworth? *Physically*, indications point in the opposite direction. At least as early as 1989, according to the Grand Rapids Press, the Alliance for Health had suggested that the area's major hospitals

could work together more to plan for the community's needs rather than embark on such ambitious expansion plans as Butterworth had at the time.

Of the five people who were on the Butterworth board early on in the merger talks and who remain on the Spectrum board (Spectrum is the new name for the merged Butterworth-Blodgett entity), I was able to contact three (Rich DeVos' and Bill Gonzalez' offices both referred me to P.R. people). All three said there was no connection between Butterworth's expanded outreach into Belknap and the push for the Butterworth-Blodgett merger. In addition, Butterworth P.R.

spokesperson Tim Bulson indicated that inpatient services have dropped in recent years while outpatient services have expanded. Their "dream" is to "decongest downtown", and move outpatient services to Cutlerville and elsewhere. While not having a direct effect on community outreach, that would curb the pressures of physical expansion into Belknap.

But there are clearly some parallels; some similar methods of operation. Through the merger process, it became

clear that both the Butterworth and Blodgett boards, whose meetings are not open to the public, are willing to resort to anti-democratic tactics to get what they want. This included denying public access to merger documents filed, using their money to buy numerous ads and pay P.R. people to sway public opinion, hiring lobbyists to influence legislation, and working out back-room deals, including at least one attempt to subvert the governmental process. That last attempt was said to be led by Rich DeVos, which is not surprising given his known history of similar actions for over 30 years.

Butterworth expands into Belknap

According to various sources, Butterworth began doing various service work in the Belknap neighborhood nearly 10 years ago. The main impetus behind that work and its rapid expansion came, according to different sources, from Bill Gonzalez, CEO of Butterworth.

For awhile its major focus was at Coit School, located in the heart of Belknap. It involved health screenings, tutoring, and other volunteer efforts.

According to Dorothy Munson, former Volunteer Services coordinator for Butterworth, and presently employed by Butterworth as director of Butterworth Community Inter-Action (Butterworth CIA, for short), in 1992 two residents approached Butterworth and asked the hospital to "help stabilize the neighborhood". Both of those residents had since reputedly left the neighborhood and could not be contacted for elaboration. Nor could I elicit an explanation from Dorothy as to why Butterworth responded so definitively to those particular people in those particular circumstances.

Following that request the LMCD (The initials stand for Leonard, Michigan, College, Division - boundary streets of the group's interest) group was formed with the stated aim of providing better health care in the neighborhood. It soon became the Belknap Renaissance Group (BRG), with an expanded mandate. BRG eventually tried to merge with NOBL. When that did not work, members of BRG ran for the NOBL board. In Fall of 1996, a majority of them won, thus taking

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over effective control of the organization. Numerous sources indicate that this entire effort was led by Dorothy Munson.

The major visible effort of the "Butterworth faction", as some term this group, has been creation of a health and community center known as Belknap Commons. It is most of the way toward completion at this writing.

Dorothy took me on a tour through this facility, which is already partially in operation, before sitting down for an interview. Co was able to paint a picture, in considerable detail, of what it would be like at its planned finish date in December. The picture is impressive, including dental services, mental health counseling, a nurse, a doctor, job skills training, a "community room" that can seat 65 people, two child care rooms, computers, a tool-lending library, a copier, washers and dryers, a telephone, and more. As one of the few new structures in a generally older area, it stands out in being fully accessible for people with disabilities. Dorothy repeatedly emphasized that the center's development is crucially dependent upon resident input and involvement. Co said residents have helped determine the needs, residents will make the rules for use of things such as the laundry facilities, the copier, and the phone, residents and other volunteers have helped with construction, and resident volunteers will be very involved in the ongoing operations of the center. And numerous people have come forth to volunteer: "It's a much better response than i ever expected."

Early on some in Belknap raised questions about the need for such a center. There was already another health clinic, Catherine's Care Center, just north of

it. Their family relationships have suffered, and they have dealt with other problems. The loud noises of the trucks have reminded them of the shotgun going off when they were robbed not too long before. Shana said Dorothy Munson simply laughed when co made that particular complaint. But having been there and heard them, i could readily understand why they would remind someone of a gunshot. Shana says, "I learned one thing from this: don't do anything with any corporation without talking to your lawyer first, because the corporation will screw you every time."

Len Holt, a NOBL board member, said the Lyles are simply greedy. From what Shana and Cameron said, it's true that at this point they want to get whatever they can from Butterworth, and then get out. They are very upset, perhaps bitter. Compared to Dorothy Munson, who wants "fancy parties", Shana says, "These are not fancy people in the neighborhood; they are down-to-earth people."

One neighborhood organizer, Rhonda Tyler, said that the day after co mentioned to Dorothy Munson that co was going to be a board member, co was contacted by three members of the Belknap Renaissance Group. They were "dressed to a T" and intimidating to Rhonda, who also identifies herself as "down-to-earth". One of the visitors said something about Rhonda's daughter, indicating that they were watching. "Right there i was against them". But Rhonda found that not voting the way the Butterworth faction wanted made being on the board a pressured, stressful relationship. "I had to leave the board in order to survive."

However, Rhonda did go to the Spring meeting where they talked about changing the by-laws. Co said the Butterworth

in Belknap regarding Butterworth's involvement. But that awareness is limited at best, and there are basic differences about the extent of the problem and about Butterworth's role.

Priscilla Dakin, a Butterworth vice-president who oversees Butterworth Community Inter-Action, said co has never met with NOBL and does not follow the neighborhood interactions closely, and consequently could give no information on the concerns expressed.

Priscilla called off an attempt to get the factions together for dialogue after someone from NOBL (co claims not to remember who) asked co to do so. In general, it seemed pretty clear that Priscilla does not exercise strong, if any, control over what Dorothy Munson and allies do in the neighborhood, despite co's awareness that serious problems exist.

Tim Bulson, to whom i was referred when i called for Butterworth CEO Bill Gonzalez, says Bill is aware of the concerns, and continues to monitor Butterworth's involvement in Belknap.

Outgoing Spectrum board president Budge Sherwood says concerns about Butterworth's involvement in Belknap have been referenced in board meetings, though co says there is so much else going on that it has been impossible to keep up with details. Co says that neighborhood involvement is "just part of Butterworth's commitment to bring health care to the community, particularly those that are underserved." Asserting that many have welcomed that involvement, co acknowledges, "Obviously it hasn't pleased everybody."

Board member Bob Hooker, however, says there has been no discussion on the board about concerns raised by Belknap residents. Co only became aware of such concerns by reading about them in the

a program that for awhile allowed employees to get no-interest loans for the purpose of buying homes, only applied to Belknap, even though Butterworth's main campus sits downtown and also borders on Heritage Hill.

One person who was active and outspoken in the neighborhood said, "We believe Butterworth is trying to gentrify the neighborhood." Co questioned to what extent the Commons would really reflect the desires of people in the neighborhood, especially considering that another health clinic (now run by Frank Lynn and supported by St. Mary's Health Services) already operates nearby. Co is clearly upset with tactics that have been used, saying Butterworth has "had their hound dogs on people". Co says that Bill Gonzalez has essentially bought the NOBL board, and asserts, "I don't care if you spend \$5 million; we should have some say in what you do."

This person asked that i not use co's name. "I don't want any more stuff right now; i just don't!"

Deb Kales also expressed concern that Butterworth is attempting to replace poor people in the neighborhood with people who are well-off.

Heritage Hill, which has long had a strong neighborhood organization, has learned through long experience that "unless there is strong pressure placed on Butterworth and developers through legal requirements or very public pressure, neighborhood concerns will not be taken seriously as compared to the desires of the hospital or its physicians." And Butterworth's interests have generally affected the neighborhood negatively, according to the Heritage Hill Association.

NOBL board member Valerie Browning is a Butterworth employee who

Leonard, that served Belknap residents. And a neighborhood service center ("The Hub") was being developed at the time (it is now open and running). The process was not open, and those questions, when answered at all, were sometimes answered with attacks. Frank Lynn was not even informed of initial discussions. After hearing about it and going to a meeting, co was asked to leave!

Two next-door neighbors of the Commons expressed other concerns.. Butterworth took an option on Shana and Cameron Lyle's house, which sits next to where Belknap Commons is going in. The Lyles got the distinct impression that Butterworth intended on following through with the option, which expires in early January 1998. Last year they remortgaged their home partly to get money for Christmas presents which they otherwise did not have. But then it looked like the option would not be exercised.

Meanwhile, as the heavy construction next door progressed, they developed leaks in the basement, obvious cracks in the walls, and a general shifting that has resulted in rain leaking in, and which will require extensive repair. The realty company that had negotiated on behalf of Butterworth had told them they expected the house's value would rise thanks to the new construction, but instead it has fallen considerably. In short, they feel lied to.

The whole thing has affected them adversely. Cameron says co lost a job over

people were trying to stop people from voicing their opinions, telling them to shut up. "I spoke out anyway, and we were able to stop them." However, the overall experience left Rhonda feeling, "You can't win against big business, i guess."

Dorothy claimed not to have information about Rhonda's charges, and to not know who the people were who confronted Rhonda. Regarding the Spring board meeting, Len Holt said Rhonda "stood up and completely dominated" it for 20 minutes, and was totally out of order in doing so. Len says co was criticized afterwards by some for not keeping Rhonda under control.

This illustrates the completely different ways that some people in Belknap have viewed the same situations, though here at least people are generally in agreement as to what happened.

Some on the "Butterworth faction" of the board seem not to have much knowledge about these and related problems. Mike Meyer, principal at Coit School, and Debbie Dubbink, a secretary there, said they are aware of some concerns but believe people are talking and that things are being worked out. Debbie says no parents have complained recently about Butterworth's involvement in Belknap, and believes that those who have such concerns are a small minority.

People up in the Butterworth hierarchy seem to have at least an awareness that there are serious concerns

paper. But goes further, saying, "I don't think they're our issues", and says the board consequently has no plans to address them.

Board member Janet Boyles, co-owner of a nursing agency, says the main purpose of Butterworth's involvement in Belknap is to make the community more healthy. Janet expressed a fairly sophisticated understanding of problems in Belknap generally, going back to when the freeway disrupted and divided the community when it was put in over 30 years ago. But co said there has only been a little discussion about current problems there as they relate to Butterworth, and knows of no plans to try to reconcile.

Effects on the neighborhood

Belknap is one of the poorer neighborhoods in Grand Rapids. At the time of the 1990 census, unemployment was high, homeownership was low, over one-fourth of households had no car, and street crime was a serious problem. Some of that is said to have changed for the better, especially homeownership and street crime. But there is little agreement as to who is responsible.

Besides providing health care, the main reason generally given for Butterworth's involvement in Belknap is to "stabilize" the area. Butterworth has no similar efforts in other areas. For instance,

loan program. Valerie seemed cautious in talking with me, but was willing, and claimed that there have not been a lot of problems expressed in the neighborhood. Co claimed Frank "left the neighborhood in a pickle", and added, "Anything i've heard i ascribe to turf."

Carol Hope, a resident who volunteers three days a week at Belknap Commons, says (on cue from Dorothy, in a meeting involving several of us) that co has lost family members to the drug-related crime that used to dominate the lives of many residents. Carol says the gangs have broken up and moved away, and that now kids are taking pride in helping to clean up the neighborhood.

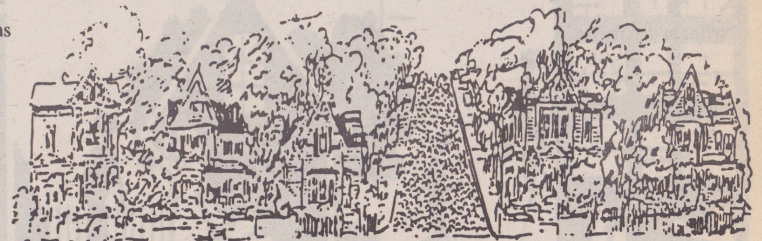
Eugene Brown talked of being involved with drugs and having other problems, and said other businesses left due to the presence of the dealers and gangs. But now, "It's a turnaround for the community and for myself. I've got something to work for now."

Carol claims, "It's all because of Dorothy Munson." Carol says co never got help from the neighborhood association before: "I don't understand why they're attacking Butterworth, or the people involved." Later co expressed great support for The Hub as well,

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apparently believing that Dorothy is also responsible for that.

This probably reflects a propensity on the part of Dorothy and others to give Butterworth more credit than its due. Jim Colgrove, who was a VISTA worker for NOBL until being fired by the new board, says the Butterworth faction at first resisted supporting the neighborhood service center because it was not under their control. Former board chair Sue Koppenol echoed that, adding that the possibility of getting money from the foundation that supported The Hub may have changed their minds (that foundation later gave Belknap Commons a large sum). Sue says when Butterworth eventually decided to try to take credit for the center, "We let them, in order to get their stamp of approval."

Deb Kales says Dorothy has "twisted" Frank's efforts, making out like Butterworth was responsible for programs that Frank developed. Such twisting seemed evident to me in one instance where Dorothy wrote that Frank had expressed no interest in developing health related resources in Belknap. Frank said it was not true, nor did it seem in character, especially in light of Frank's subsequent involvement with Catherine's Care Center.

Others in the meeting with myself and Dorothy did not say anything even when I asked, though they did speak when Dorothy asked them.

Steve Faas, a NOBL board member who survived the Butterworth takeover, and co-director of Clancy Street Ministries, says the neighborhood takeover was done in the same manner as the merger with Blodgett. Nice words are spoken, but things are done secretly,

do; it only requires them to preach the gospel of their church. That is what they get paid for. But, says Carol, "What we found in the neighborhood is that for people to be healthy spiritually they have to be built up emotionally and often physically." Co cited an example of someone who was using drugs and receiving welfare payments who is now self-supporting and starting his own ministry, "an ideal example of what we would love to see happen with people."

The Faas's moved into the neighborhood from Jenison in order to be part of its daily life. In visiting, one could clearly see their positive interactions with some of the neighborhood children. They are deeply involved.

Another neighborhood has been adversely affected by all this. The immediate event precipitating Frank Lynn's departure was rejection of funding so that NOBL could provide service to Metro Gardens, which borders Belknap and is located in the Highland Park neighborhood. People from Highland Park had requested NOBL's help.

Two to three years before, Highland Park had requested to have its whole area merge with NOBL. Frank says that Dorothy, at the time head of the newly created Butterworth CIA, made "an all-out effort to discourage the merger". That effort was successful.

When the proposal was made for NOBL to provide service to Metro Gardens, the new NOBL board had come in. It was voted down without any substantial discussion, leading some to believe that the pro-Butterworth faction must have met privately beforehand and decided among themselves to reject the idea.

Frank says that as a result, Highland

mediate, but that never occurred because someone from the Butterworth faction convinced Priscilla to call it off. Carol says the pro-Butterworth faction had asked Second Ward City Commissioner Linda Samuelson (the greater part of Belknap's population is in the Second Ward; none of it is in the Third Ward) to reprimand George for getting involved in Belknap affairs, and that Linda, according to George, had done so.

I checked with Linda and George, and both denied any knowledge of such a thing. Having known both for a long time and having found both to be credible, yet having an intuitive sense (my intuition has long served me well) that Carol was to be trusted, I found this strange. Carol was further frustrated upon hearing this, and commented, "I think there's some backing off here."

However this happened, what is clear is that a wall put up by some has created such problems, and has made it almost impossible to have the cross-communication necessary to resolve them.

Carol's subsequent questions in a letter to the board as to what happened and why, and what the board would do toward reconciliation after having subverted this attempt, met with no satisfactory answers. But that was no the end of it

Not long after reading that letter at a board meeting, Carol found out that Len Holt had contacted Carol's church board as well as the synod with complaints that Carol was anti-Butterworth. Len asked that Carol be removed. Both bodies took the charges seriously and investigated, and both found them to lack merit. In fact, Carol says the charges did not even make sense to those bodies.

The grocery store controversy

Several people in Belknap brought up the loss of the only nearby grocery store (Pastoor's), which had gone out of business nearly 10 years before, as a major concern. Most were critical of Butterworth's role in that loss.

The freeway had served as a dividing line for Butterworth in a very tangible way. From at least the mid-1980s the hospital had sought to expand north as far as the freeway, and had bought property with that aim. It took a major step in that expansion when it finally convinced Pastoor's, which had operated right across from the hospital's main campus for over 60 years, to sell out. Pastoor's had become unprofitable due to loss of homes and stability in the area, a loss attributable in large part to expansion of Butterworth and related medical and office centers, as well as construction of the freeway and parking lots. Ironically the retail area that included Pastoor's was to be replaced in part by a major parking ramp built to serve Butterworth.

Neighbors, especially from Belknap, put considerable pressure on Butterworth to put in another grocery and otherwise to replace retail services that were displaced. Butterworth's response was to hire a lobbyist in an attempt to elicit support for its plans. When it looked like the opposition was too great, Butterworth decided to go for a zoning variance that would allow a six-story office building. According to some, the income from the extra two stories would more than make up for any losses a grocery might suffer. Neighbors

pressures are brought to bear, etc. Steve says Dorothy gave the assurance, "You folks are going to drive the bus", but as soon as people actually said they wanted something that was not Butterworth's agenda, the pressures would start, things would be removed from board minutes, etc.

Stuff has been done to attempt to discredit us, says Steve. Other board members try, often rudely, "to shut me up". Frank had gotten people involved, but as a result of all the pressures, many people no longer care; they don't want to face the continuous conflict. "When Frank left there was a spirit of cooperation and encouragement that left." Steve co-sells is tired of it, and not planning to run for another term on the board.

Sue Koppenol, former NOBL board president, says Dorothy and other pro-Butterworth people would take people out to eat. "They would talk about what they wanted to see for the neighborhood, and try to get you to agree with them." Co feels that helped determine who is on the board now. Like Steve Faas, Sue says, "I was just tired of it all."

I asked Rich Bowman, the person hired to replace Frank Lynn as NOBL director, about the recently aborted attempt to get the factions together that had been led by Carol Faas, co-director of Clancy Street Ministries along with cospouse, Steve. Rich said, "I'm not convinced that they're trying to solve the problem, because if they solve the problem they're out of business."

Len Holt also implicitly attacked neighborhood churches, which have traditionally been a strong force in the neighborhood, saying they keep people dependent, and: "There's also a very strong sentiment that if our church doesn't do it, nobody should."

Asked about charges that they try to keep people dependent, Carol says their job does not require them to do all they

essentially dissolved, an assessment confirmed by that association's former president, Ray Tromp. Ray says people in the area in question were dealing with a lot of problems and wanted to associate with NOBL because they believed NOBL "had a lot of pull". But most people there are "just kind of withdrawing from everything" since the rejection. "I think they're kind of fed up with the whole system."

Getting at the truth

To some degree this is impossible. One person says somethings, another denies it, and there is no way to check for sure.

Len Holt told of a petition allegedly signed by over 500 residents in support of the center, then claimed that Frank Lynn held up a copy of that petition at a meeting and said, "So what! What do we care what 600 people want?"

Frank politely calls Len a liar: "That never happened." Frank questions the very existence of such a petition, but also says, "If you circulate a petition saying we want more health care, who is not going to sign it?"

Carol Faas, working with Priscilla Dakin, tried to set up a meeting between the two factions. They asked Third Ward City Commissioner George Heartwell to

concerns about feeling unjustly attacked, co replied that they "have no accountability". Dorothy mentioned that Len had first tried to deal with the Faas's concerns "quietly". Len would only say for publication that co came out of that attempt "not feeling good".

Not to my surprise, when i subsequently talked to Carol, i learned that Len (who complained about "no accountability") had contacted Carol's board again, still at it, apparently in response to my having raised the issue of Len's attacks.

Carol, like many who do not like how Butterworth has dealt with the neighborhood in some ways, is appreciative of most of Butterworth's programs, but says, "I just wish it had been done differently." At this point co still fervently wishes for reconciliation "between Butterworth Community Inter-Action and what the rest of us are doing in the neighborhood."

One other instance of apparent miscommunication/rumor seems to have been more easily resolved. At least two people suggested that one person who had been newly elected to the NOBL board last year may have been intimidated into resigning by the pro-Butterworth faction.

provided that Butterworth would make every possible effort to get a grocery store and other retail on the first floor. That agreement was finally approved by the City in 1991.

Butterworth subsequently did make an effort to establish another grocery and other retail on the ground floor of the office building/parking ramp it subsequently contracted to construct. Some retail was put in, but the critical grocery store never worked out. Apparently there was never a willingness to use the extra income from the office space to support a grocery, which certainly could have made a crucial difference.

Finally, earlier this year, it successfully sought to remove the retail restrictions that area residents had pushed for. A letter requesting the change was written about three weeks following Frank Lynn's resignation from NOBL. Two weeks later the City sent out the required notification letters. No residences in Belknap were on the notification list, though NOBL was notified. Usually notices are sent out to allow about 15 days before the scheduled hearing, but in this case they were sent out just in time to allow the minimum requirement of five days notice. The hearing was held a few days before the Michigan Hill Network, a group that includes neighborhood representatives and others interested in the Michigan Hill area, was scheduled to meet, and not long after nobody showed up at its previously scheduled meeting whose location had, without explanation, been changed. Despite concerns expressed by some on the Planning Commission about this lack of neighborhood representation, the proposal passed with nobody there to testify except representatives from Butterworth and the management

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In checking, that person, who freely answered my questions, said co had resigned due to a change in job schedule that made it impossible to continue going to board meetings.

One of the frequent responses of pro-Butterworth people, as soon as Frank Lynn's name came up (which it often did), was, "Frank doesn't live in the neighborhood." That is true, nor does Dorothy Munson, but nobody ever said that about Dorothy. The fact is, both have been very involved in the neighborhood for a long time, so it was clearly unfair to single out Frank in that way.

Frank continues to believe that corporate support has a role in neighborhood organizing, despite cos experience with Butterworth. But co says partnership "implies mutual respect and collaboration", which did not exist.

Despite some denials and frequent claims of "I don't know", some things seem pretty evident.

Dorothy and cos supporters tended to focus their energies on defending Belknap Commons. While some raised concerns about the Commons, virtually nobody in Belknap opposed it outright. Rather, concerns expressed centered around Butterworth taking away people's voices. As Jim Colgrove expressed it, "They're telling us what we want now: 'Here you go, this is good for you.'"

When i made this point at the meeting with Dorothy Munson, Len Holt responded, "The people you are hearing that from are the dividers" who are the people who formerly ran the neighborhood with "absolute power".

From this and other comments, it is clear that Len is projecting; attributing

see no way to justify anyone earning so much, not to mention someone in a supposedly "non-profit" corporation, which is exempt from taxes on the theory that it serves the public good. Beyond that, it is hard to see how someone who "earns" so much and who has a P.R. person to field calls can identify very well with a community that is composed mostly of poor, "down-to-earth" people.

While there is some exaggeration and misinformation on both sides, the neighborhood's Butterworth faction clearly has a history of closed meetings, intimidation, use of money to gain favor, taking credit where credit was not due, and other anti-democratic practices. This history is credibly reflected by numerous people, and in some available documents.

In sum, here is what appears to have happened: A series of groups funded by Butterworth and led by Butterworth employee Dorothy Munson gradually became more involved in the neighborhood. Those groups, which excluded those who did not generally support the Butterworth agenda, made many decisions secretly. Vocal critics were attacked, while the criticisms themselves were often sidestepped or ignored. While specifically denying that they had any intention of displacing the existing neighborhood association, they proceeded to do just that. Once the people involved took control of NOBL, similar tactics were used, thus further alienating many people in the neighborhood.

Frank says people in Butterworth's hierarchy "never could get the difference between paternalism and empowerment. Where the neighborhood association had wanted to empower neighbors, Butterworth wanted to perform surgery".

Reconciliation?

found that one of them, John McKnight, had written that our communities are weak partly because service institutions are "too powerful, authoritative, and strong". Co cited some of the research indicating that health care institutions in particular tend to perpetuate dependency and fail to deal with the real health needs of communities. The major antidote to this is to emphasize real community control, including citizenship, neighborhood-based governance, local investment, and production as well as consumption.

As Butterworth's point person in Belknap, Dorothy has clearly assimilated some of those ideas. They come out frequently in various statements. The reality is just as clearly a long way from catching up to the statements, as Dorothy in fact maintains pretty tight control. But sometimes when rhetoric is repeated often enough it can take hold. People at least can compare the rhetoric to the reality, and apply pressure accordingly.

When Rich Bowman was hired, co was quoted in the *Press* as planning to do "everything in my power" to work for reconciliation. But when i asked what had in fact been done, co said, "That work is up to those in the neighborhood. I'd be happy to refer you to our board chair, Faith Kent." (Faith's response to my questioning appears at the beginning of the article.) Rich suggested that part of "your weakness" is my information comes "from a disgruntled employee".

Rich expressed the belief that building community means focusing "as much on high-income people as on low-income people", and rejecting the service model, which targets those most in need.

In short, despite promising statements made initially, it has become clear that folks will have to look elsewhere for leadership that can move the community



Recognizing the "huge division between the pro- and anti-Butterworth factions", Amy considers it part of cos job to try to get the factions together. It "has been no easy task", and has meant having to "bite my lip" at times in order to at least appear neutral. But, even though "some nasty things have gone on", Amy considers the effort successful. People in the neighborhood generally support The Hub, and are working together for it. Co says it is "easy to attack this big corporation", but says Butterworth has done a lot of good things, and suggests their motives may be "nothing more than cleaning up their front steps".

Amy says, "Even the people who have done horrible, rotten things to others, it's not that they're evil people." Some personalities are abrasive, but co believes generally that "people mean no harm". Amy appreciates the "good people who really care" in the neighborhood - from both factions and from neither. "That's what drives me."

I see that caring too; the tremendous good that has been done for the neighborhood, and that is still being done, by people with varying alignments or with none. It does provide hope, but it also seems to me that further organization and

the neighborhood, in fact, say Len is hateful, unwilling to consider facts, etc.; the very things Len attributes to others.

But this is not just someone who gets out of hand occasionally. Frank Lynn says the Butterworth faction is well aware of what is happening: "They use him".

Dorothy's comment about Len trying to deal with the Faas's "quietly" before taking other action verified further that Dorothy (and therefore Butterworth) support such intimidating tactics.

Given the relatively low income of most people in Belknap, salary levels are one indication of who can really identify with people in the neighborhood. Frank Lynn earned \$18,500 a year as NOBL's organizer. When Rich Bowman took over, that was upped to \$23,000 or \$26,000 (two different sources). Together, Steve and Carol Faas make roughly \$45,000 per year. Dorothy Munson was said to have earned about \$50,000 in her previous position as director of Butterworth's volunteer program; that amount is presumed to have risen since.

Perhaps most pertinent here is Bill Gonzalez's earnings, about \$400,000 yearly according to the *Press*. Tim Bulson said that is normal for the CEO of a hospital of Butterworth's size. In a community - and a world - filled with people struggling against poverty, it can

have not worked. Sue Koppenol tried to arrange a formal mediation in 1995 through the Dispute Resolution Center, but was unable to get agreement from Dorothy and Len. Len claims that attempt was aborted because "we discovered Sue and Frank had tried to make that a matter against us personally."

Sue says various attempts have been made, but "you can't just settle a dispute if both sides don't want it settled, or if they ignore what was said."

Regarding the more recent attempt made by Carol Faas, Dorothy simply responded, "A lot of what you're talking about is historical", and then launched into other subjects. But Co concluded, "I think it's up to the providers to not create difficulties for the residents. I'm committed to doing my part." At another point Dorothy asked rhetorically, "Is crime reduction a bad thing?" Co then expressed willingness to work with all "providers" in the neighborhood.

Valerie Browning says intensely, "I work very hard, 18 hours a day, for this neighborhood", and follows with, "I want to see that work rewarded with substantial gains for the neighborhood." Co expressed willingness to talk with anyone, and hope that problems can be resolved.

Dorothy said at one point that much of her work is based upon the ideas of two researchers at Northwestern University. I

toward reconciliation.

Despite the pressures, not all of Belknap's leaders fit neatly into a category. Jerome Burton, co-pastor at Coit Community Church, expressed a healthy wariness of Butterworth and its motives. "Anything could happen with giants like that. They could control [the neighborhood] if they wanted, 'cause they've got the money." But Jerome also said that Butterworth has been meeting real neighborhood needs, and as long as that continues, "they can put Butterworth things all over the neighborhood as far as most people are concerned."

One resident who has been active in Belknap (who asked not to be named) said everyone worked together on behalf of the neighborhood before Butterworth started taking over. But in the past few years serious divisions have been created. "Everything is secretive now all the way up the line. You have to scratch a back to get somewhere." People see each other as enemies. Co calls it a "no-winning situation", and believes it will take new people to get past the divisions.

Perhaps Amy Schatner is one such. Amy recently hired on as director of The Hub, which officially opened in Creston Plaza (a public housing development in Belknap) in September. Staffed also with a police officer, one of The Hub's main attractions is computers available for community use.

effort will be required, which may be particularly difficult for those who already feel discouraged and under attack. It will require the courage and wisdom that some in the neighborhood clearly have, to challenge and demand an end to the divisiveness, the attacks, the secretiveness, while at the same time demonstrating care for all involved and a willingness to swallow some hurts in order to move toward a new unity.

Perhaps the biggest mistake on the part of the "anti-Butterworth" faction, as some call it, has been putting too much trust in Butterworth, and spending too much energy fighting with others in the neighborhood rather than challenging the source of so many of the problems. It will probably require pressure on Butterworth, at the highest levels, to work at undoing the harm it has done in the process of trying to "do good" for the area. That institution is vulnerable because it is clearly implicated, despite the denials or claimed ignorance of various spokespeople, not only in the divisive attacks that have been made upon community members, but in the long-term breakdown of community cohesion.

Butterworth (Spectrum) is still, at least in name under the law, a non-profit institution. And it is controlled by people who live in the Grand Rapids area. While some of the key people have made themselves generally inaccessible, the majority have not.

Butterworth

Neighborhood Association