

COURTS

Judge to convict: Call me once a month for two years

BY ROBERT KOOPMANS

A B.C. Supreme Court justice took the unusual step Tuesday of overseeing the rehabilitation of a man who pleaded guilty to stealing a store clerk's cellphone then threatening him with a crowbar.

In addition to reporting weekly to a probation officer, Dale Olesko, 32, will also have monthly phone chats with Justice Joel Groves — for the entirety of his two-year probation order.

Groves informed Olesko of the monthly teleconferences as he handed him six and a half months in jail and two years probation for assault, mischief and uttering threats.

The judge made the unique demand after saying he had serious reservations about a joint submission proposed by the Crown and defence lawyers.

It was the lawyers who proposed the length of the jail and probationary periods, suggesting Olesko be required to reside at an intensive residential treatment centre for nine months after he serves his jail sentence.

The man has battled drug addiction since he was 24.

But Groves pointed to Olesko's lengthy criminal record, especially to eight convictions for breaching other probation orders.

He said a four-year jail sentence would be a far better alternative in some respects, as it would deny Olesko any ability to commit further crimes.

He said the man's record shows almost blatant disregard for the courts and justice.

"What is a judge to do?" Justice Groves asked rhetorically.

Olesko looked shocked in the prisoner's box as Groves suggested the man could be headed for a federal penitentiary for such a long spell.

In the end, however, the judge went along with the proposed joint sentence, with the extra judicial supervision thrown in for good measure.

"You came very close to doing a serious amount of [jail] time," Groves told Olesko, who breathed heavily and looked visibly relieved.

"I made a judgment call I may regret, but I am prepared to use some of my time to ensure your compliance [with probation]," Groves concluded after sentencing.

Kamloops Daily News



The graphic shows an artist's rendering of a proposal for an 11-storey social housing building at 675 East Broadway. A group of residents is opposed to the proposal because of concerns over an increase in violence.

HOMELESSNESS

Neighbourhood group opposes social housing in Mount Pleasant

BY TIFFANY CRAWFORD
VANCOUVER SUN

Residents in Vancouver's Mount Pleasant neighbourhood are fighting a proposal to build social and low-income housing at the intersection of East Broadway and Fraser Street, one of the 14 dedicated sites promised by the municipal and provincial governments to battle the city's homeless crisis.

The city of Vancouver is expected to vote today on a proposal to rezone 675 East Broadway to allow for construction of an 11-storey building for homeless, troubled youth and low-income renters to live.

Under the plan, there will be ground-level retail space, the Broadway Youth Resource Centre, 24 market rental suites and 103 single-room-occupancy suites for adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including 30 for at-risk youth.

But unlike two other approved social housing sites in the Mount Pleasant area — 225 West Second and 1723 Main — this proposal is facing

opposition from a group of residents.

At a public hearing tonight, members of the group will argue the building is too large and does not fit the Mount Pleasant heritage esthetic.

The group says it welcomes social housing in the community, but would prefer to see the site developed into a 50-unit building with mixed social housing, according to its website mountpleasantneighbours.org.

There is also concern that many people from the Downtown Eastside would move into the building and the level of drug-related violence would increase.

But Ian Mass, executive director of Pacific Community Resources, a social service agency which runs the youth centre, argued that most of the residents who would occupy the units already live in the neighbourhood.

"Many of the youth we see are couch surfing or living in substandard basements," he said. "We support the whole project. It will open up more rental housing and it will be for those who can afford it."

Part of the plan includes expanding the youth centre on the ground level and increasing the number of support staff to manage and provide social support to the residents.

"We're not just looking at a building, we're looking at creating a

community."

If approved, the Vancouver Native Housing Society will operate the building.

The society runs 15 housing complexes on the east side of Vancouver.

Executive director David Eddy said some residents are fearful that drugs and crime will be imported from the Downtown Eastside and that the place will be full of people with mental disorders and drug problems. But he denied this would be the case.

"We would not put a person with severe addictions or severe mental health issues in that building. We have other buildings in the Downtown Eastside that can provide for that level of need," Eddy said.

"We are cognizant of the neighbourhood and we want to be good neighbours and fit in."

He cautioned that not all homeless people suffer from addictions or mental disorders and noted that many people who used to live in Mount Pleasant have been displaced because of high rent.

The proposal is part of the city and the province's 14 dedicated social housing sites. At the end of 2007, the two levels of government announced they would construct 12 buildings with 1,200 rooms, dispersed across the city. It was later expanded to 14 sites.

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Canwest Canspell word of the day

argy-bargy

\ahr-jee-BAHR-jee\ (noun)

DEFINITION: a lively discussion; argument, dispute

After much argy-bargy, Paul and Hugh finally came up with a plan that satisfied them both.

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