

Sliwa asks to meet with police chief after disturbance at housing complex

By Jonathan Lucas
Assistant City Editor
Stamford Advocate

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NORWALK - Guardian Angels founder Curtis Sliwa is calling for a meeting with Police Chief Harry Rilling after a confrontation Friday night between one of the volunteer organization's patrols and officers in South Norwalk.

Residents of the King Kennedy public housing complex on Chestnut Street also reported that members of the volunteer crimefighting organization were pelted with rocks and bottles during their visit.

"The people at King Kennedy were not happy they were here. They didn't treat them nice at all," said Zina Russell, a longtime resident of King Kennedy. "People were throwing bottles, rocks and stuff and they were being cursed at. They were treated badly here and on the street."

Sliwa said he was not aware of the hostile reception. The head of the New Haven-based detachment, who would only give his name as "Sausage," said while angels have faced problems in the past, they were welcomed by residents on Friday.

Both Sliwa and "Sausage" said they were more concerned about their treatment from police. They said police threatened to arrest them for trespassing on Norwalk Housing Authority property when they reported a disturbance shortly before 9 p.m. and referred to them as "goombahs."

"Instead of thanking us, they said that's private property and we could arrest you," Sliwa said.

Sliwa said he hopes to meet with Rilling about the incident this week.

Rilling said he does not want an adversarial relationship with the Guardian Angels and is willing to meet as part of a team of city officials including the mayor, housing authority director and city attorney to go over "ground rules" for the group to follow.

Rilling and Mayor Richard Moccia have opposed the formation of a Guardian Angels chapter in South Norwalk saying the group sends the wrong message about Norwalk and presents liability issues. But Rilling said the group has the right to organize and would be accorded the same treatment as any other citizen's group.

Rilling said there's been no complaint filed about Friday night's incident and said his officers responded after some King Kennedy residents indicated they did not want the Guardian Angels on their property.

Rilling said he has placed a call to Norwalk Housing Authority Executive Director Curtis Law to clarify whether the red sateen-adorned volunteers have approval to be on public housing property. He said he cannot treat the angels any differently from any other citizen found trespassing on public housing property.

Norwalk police Sgt. Lee Young who responded to Friday night's call and talked to "Sausage," said he never threatened to arrest any Guardian Angels.

"I advised them that they should speak with the housing authority to discuss what their role should be," Young said. "They were treated with the utmost courtesy and respect and they decided to leave themselves."

Allamakee Walker, 32-year resident of King Kennedy said she would welcome the Guardian Angels to patrol the complex.

"I think the Guardian Angels are good," Walker said. "I don't think the police should tell them to leave. They should tell the other ones who were throwing rocks at them to leave."

- Assistant City Editor Jonathan Lucas can be reached at jlucas@scni.com, or 750-5325.

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