

INTERVIEWS WITH THE MONSTER

INTERVIEWS WITH THE MONSTER

Journalist: Mayor, where do you think the mistake was?

Mayor: In a total lack of communication. The transformation plan explicitly states how communication is to be conducted: Round tables, town halls with citizens. Regrettably, none of those ever occurred. I think it's unfortunate that when the regional council bought the land from a private owner, they never came to us to discuss their plans for it.

Journalist: What bothers people the most? Is it the location, the way it looks or the number of clients?

Mayor: People wrongly claim that we don't like the clients, which is not true in the slightest. What bothers us most, as the local residents who take care of disabled people would tell you themselves, is the location. It's absolutely unsuitable. It's on the town's outskirts, so there can be no question of integration and, moreover, the 1975 zoning plans include a bypass of the township at a minimum distance of two plots. Besides, the building is to be constructed in close proximity to high-voltage powerlines. So, we're supposed to build a new home for citizens who are oftentimes more sensitive than able-bodied people in the middle of a field and in close proximity to high voltage and a bypass road?

Journalist: Do you blame people for defending themselves?

Mayor: Everyone is afraid of the unknown. Another thing is that it's unclear what will happen to the structure in the future. Such projects are maintainable for five to ten years. What happens when this period of time is up? We have no idea, so it makes sense to be so worried about the future. To be honest, some local residents have expressed themselves in rather insensitive ways...

Journalist: On Friday, the regional council informed the media

that their president's negotiations with the town representatives about a home for disabled people had been successful and the project now has local support. Did representatives from the regional council actually visit the town?

Mayor: I asked for a meeting with the regional council president because I could no longer bear the criticism leveled against our town. On Thursday, we met at a permanent regional conference chaired by the regional council president. I told him that this wouldn't have happened had their communication been better and that we have ideas about locations that would be more suitable - although, as I noted, those would not belong to the municipal government. He promised that he would visit sometime in January.

Journalist: For town halls with the local residents and meetings with representatives from the petition committee? From the municipal government?

Mayor: That is up for discussion. I sincerely hope that representatives from the petition committee who requested his presence will participate.

Journalist: Can you tell us more about the new location?

Mayor: It's a suitable location close to the center. Although, as I have noted, it is privately owned at the moment. We need to discuss and consider the traffic load associated with operating that facility: supplying, visits from relatives, parking availability...It's not possible to move the housing from one end of the town to the other.

Journalist: In the neighboring village - right across the field, so to speak - there is a home for disabled people. Have you asked about their experiences with managing their peaceful coexistence? As far as I know, there have been no issues...

Mayor: You won't ask me how I sleep at night?

Journalist, Representative of the Petition Committee, Local Resident, Resident L. M., Child's Fear: Appeal to local representatives: Dear mayor, dear municipal council, on 14th March 2016, as part of the 10th session of the council, you approved the notion to integrate twelve physically disabled people into our town. We believe that at that time this decision was to the best of your knowledge and conscience. However, it should be stated that, according to the notion, these twelve clients, who have an unclear diagnosis and who are mostly men, would be free to move around the town. This could introduce a new element to the town, one that the local residents are not fully prepared for and which would impact both children and adults on a daily basis. This notion had been voted down by mayors of other municipalities - and yet, you seek our approval. We feel directly threatened by this integration of the disabled. We are worried about our children, our families, and our future.

Dear representatives, we would kindly like to ask you to reconsider your position during the working council session on 21 January 2019. This is the request of your citizens: Please do not allow the regional council to build two semi-detached houses in our town for such a purpose. Don't let these inscrutable people among us. Leave our community as it is now. Reconsider your choice and think whether it wouldn't actually be a step back - and please, keep in mind that such a step would have a permanent effect on all our future generations. Consider whether this move would be helpful to the disabled clients who would be asked to integrate in an environment that is unwelcoming to them. Consider whether this would help or harm our community. Consider what the supposed benefits would be. Vote in accordance with what is best for your citizens and, especially, for the children.

Thank you,
Town residents

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: I supported the petition. The regional council chose an unsuitable location for integrating disabled people. In addition, the municipal government didn't know about the plans ... As I stated previously: they should have come, organized round tables, talked to us about it. Perhaps there would be people voicing their disagreement, but it's only natural to get defensive when you don't have enough information

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: The left hand wasn't entirely sure what the right hand was doing, which resulted in us buying a plot of land before conducting talks...The local government is not against the project, but we need to further discuss the matter and find solutions...The law does not require the regional council to discuss upcoming plans with local residents!...I'm a hundred percent sure that we can come to an agreement...I would definitely be disappointed if such a major project got sunk by a misunderstanding. And I believe we've corrected that...we resolved the discrepancies in our mutual understanding...According to experts, this is the best way to integrate disabled people into society!

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: We selected land that is not so much on the outskirts, but closer to the center, which we believe would be more suitable...All the various alternatives were proposed to satisfy local residents and especially the clients. The options are either a plot of land belonging to the municipality or a single house that is closer to the center. The house is privately owned, however, and we'd need to discuss the matter with the owners...Contrary to what the media has been saying, it didn't have anything to do with the fact that

they're disabled people...The townspeople were lacking information. They should have informed us and asked if the land they selected was suitable, which we would tell them it WASN'T. It's too close to high-voltage power lines and to the so-called town bypass. I'm not ashamed to admit that I signed the petition: The whole project seemed mismanaged to me!

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: This issue is a very emotionally heated one. In my opinion, the dispute could have been easily avoided had the regional officials done a better job communicating their intentions. It caused a lot of frustration... Do you have children?... I know the people here - it's not true what the media says. I support the petition; I was there when it was being written. I signed it because the planned building clashes with the surroundings and it's wholly inappropriate for the neighborhood. If you have children, you surely understand. Personally, I also have a problem with how the regional government completely overlooked the local residents. Nobody talked to them or asked for their input. After all, we learned about the building basically by accident! The owners of the property next door noticed that somebody was blocking their driveway. They went to ask what was going on and were told that a geological survey was being carried out because there were plans to build a new housing project there.

Journalist: 677 residents signed the petition that circulated the town. The town has fewer than 2000 residents, so roughly a quarter signed the petition.

Journalist: Local Resident L. M.

Local Resident L. M.: I live near where the building is supposed to be...We're all worried. We don't like it because this is a neighborhood of family houses. Of course I signed the petition. A bunch of families with small

kids have moved here over the last decade. I don't think it's okay for people with mental or physical disabilities to be close to kids this small. Kids here are like village kids - they play outside all day...

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: The situation at the end of the year was not at all pleasant for our town. We were slandered and dragged by the media. In the last month I've given fourteen interviews...fourteen! They wrote that we don't want disabled people here. That's not true. We know how to live with those people - we will live with them and gladly welcome them here!

Journalist: Local Resident L. M.

Local Resident L. M.: We are all sexual beings, even those who are mentally handicapped. If sexual energies accumulate in the mentally handicapped, they can become aggressive... I will absolutely not raise my kids next to twelve mentally handicapped people!

Journalist: Some time ago, flyers appeared in the streets in which an anonymous author warned against sheltered housing for disabled people. According to the writer, the clients of the institution would be dangerous to their surroundings. "These men have the minds of preschoolers, but the bodies and sexual urges of adults. All of them use strong medication and if they don't take it, they pose a risk to everyone around them," reads the flyer distributed among local residents in January.

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: I would appreciate neighbors like that. We are mainly looking for a familial type of housing for our clients. I wish for them to have a home they'd be happy to live in and for people to accept them. In the current conditions, the clients live in a high-density housing facility, whereas there they

would live in two households. They could decide for themselves how to spend their time, when to wake up in the morning or what to have for dinner.

The idea was for twelve of our clients to move there. They'd have nurses looking after them in the new town. The nurses were also already counting on moving to the new place - it's been a long-debated thing. The decision shocked many of us. Our main goal is so that our clients can participate in everyday life, be a part of regular society. There is no reason to be afraid of them. We've been in our current location for eighteen years and there have never been any incidents. They are people who have some sort of disability and while they may look a little different at first sight, they know how to act in society...

Journalist: L. M.'s statement from the December council meeting

Local Resident L.M.: "Do I look like I want to include twelve disabled people in my family? Look, all my emotions come from me fearing for my family. You want me to lower my own property value. You want me to look at disabled people for the rest of my life! Other people in town may or may not meet these people, but I'm gonna have them in front of me all the time, Monday through Sunday. 24 hours a day! This whole thing completely ruined Christmas for me!"

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: I live near the place where the 12-person housing is to be built... (speaking to a child) Don't throw that on the floor!... It's a quiet place, lots of greenery... (to the child) Can you get up, please?... Right now!... I'm convinced ... I'm convinced that the construction is against the zoning plan. That's why I helped draft the petition. The operation of this facility in terms of the movement of people or the increased traffic does not correspond

to the function of a family development intended for rural living, the one that is already here, and which is planned here for the future. I was surprised that this whole situation had been maliciously misinterpreted and insensitively simplified to make it seem like the town is prejudiced against disabled people. The plot in the village has been in the ownership of the regional government for roughly a year. They made a mistake in not informing the locals or the municipality about their plan and moved straight to construction preparations. We wish to provide no further comment on the matter... (to the child) We're going home!!... Are you deaf?... everything we say always gets used against us!

Journalist: Local Resident Ms. Lída

Local Resident Ms. Lída: Wait, I'll put the bags down. Those people should be integrated into society. It shouldn't be so hard to find a place for them here. The land outside the town wasn't being used for anything and, as far as I know, the town had no plans for it. As far back as I can remember, it had always been overgrown, unmaintained. It doesn't make sense to me why it should bother anyone... Look at what this did to our reputation and all that just because it's supposedly so hard to have a few disabled people around. Some people are selfish... Honestly, I never would have thought that something like this could happen here. I keep trying to tell myself that most people here are decent and they're just as disgusted and ashamed by this as I am... even some of the ones who signed the petition have been apologizing to me. Now we're getting lambasted by the entire country... the fear in the community had also been further stoked by fake news about sexual deviants and other dangerous individuals living in the housing without any oversight and claims that the people moving in are going to reduce property values. None of that is true!

Journalist: Local Resident

Local Resident: I was born here. I just bought the newspaper and, once again, there's an article about us. Unfortunately, we've become rather infamous. I supported the petition. Besides other things, one of the issues I had with the project was that the house was supposed to stand on the outskirts, taking up arable land. I don't have any issues with the facility as such, although to be honest, I wouldn't want to live right across the street from it...I just don't like the idea of it being built in the fields. Instead, they could have just converted an older building for their use. I have no issues with disabled people - they need to live alongside us.

Journalist: Child's Fear

Child's Fear: I was walking down the street near the place where they were going to be building...Mom said that it wouldn't be safe. She said she wouldn't let us go outside, because those people would be around, and you don't know what they're capable of. I had a dream that the house had already been built. It was several stories tall and a weird sort of music was coming from inside it. We were afraid to go there and there were rumors that weird stuff happened there. The building had bars everywhere and had a strange shape, it seemed to me as if it was constantly changing. Sometimes it was square and symmetrical, at other times it looked a bit like a spaceship. There were two sensors above the entrance that looked like eyes. They were watching us as we passed by. Mom told me not to come any closer so that nothing happens to me. It had no windows or regular doors with handles. If the door closed behind you, you wouldn't be able to get out.

Journalist: Architect

Architect: I proceeded as with any other contract. The instructions from the regional government were clear, no sense denying that. Speed was also a high priority. It's a very complex plot of land - it's at the end of a spread out town development. There were power

lines, a bypass planned for the future ... I decided on expressive shapes that form an inner world of their own. The building respects its limits and fits in with the surroundings. I don't want to be associated with the thing that got leaked to the public. It was just a basic sketch and a general concept of the building's location. I consider this matter as finished, please do not contact me any further...

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: "We cannot build anything other than what the zoning plan allows. Besides, we're not trying to build a behemoth. It's meant to be family-style housing. It's intended to fit two groups of six with two sets of utilities. I personally think that such a structure would fit in perfectly with the surroundings... The planned construction is part of the regional transformation plan. We have already conducted one such transformation in a different town. We created housing for 68 clients who now live in regular apartments or family houses... Besides, the law does not require the regional council to discuss upcoming plans with local residents!... Given this... we have outlined a solution which we seek to discuss further. The town informed us that they have alternatives to the currently-selected plot. If the new location is approved by the local council, we will continue negotiations. All steps are aimed at making the transformation a success and to satisfy all the parties. I don't think we haven't been communicative enough. There was some sort of a communication noise, yes, noise is the right word, but now the communication has ramped up to such an extent... we're trying to nip the things that could lead to the project not getting approved in the bud. We want to fine-tune everything, to the last detail. I was very pleased that the town is welcoming, it's not a xenophobic town!"

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: After seeing the study for the two-floor building, I simply couldn't agree. The contractors have to fulfill the requirements for the new building to adequately fit in with the rest of the town. This almost looks like some sort of bunker with gun towers - it seems that there aren't many options available given the close proximity to high-voltage power lines.

Journalist: "When the media ran a story this week that the local residents are opposing the construction of sheltered housing for disabled people, the whole situation was presented as rather simple one. Citing from a news report: 'the ignorant and hateful residents forced both the regional and municipal governments to abandon the meritorious idea.' But as we were able to find out, the main reason for the backlash was fear of the unknown, which none of the institutions involved managed to alleviate."

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: We've been building a community here for years and we strongly believe that this is a safe and calm town. We do our best to communicate with our citizens, to be interested in their concerns and needs and to be as forthcoming as possible. If this building causes any sort of anxiety or dissatisfaction, it's a clear signal for us not to support the project - this is in addition to the aforementioned reasons, of course. The last few months have been terrible. We've been under a huge amount of pressure. But I will not make decisions based on public pressure, especially when it comes from members of the public who don't live here and don't know anything about the situation here. I haven't been sleeping well because of it, to be perfectly honest. It's the sort of publicity that our town never asked for and that we'll never be able to get rid of.

Journalist: Local Resident

Local Resident: I read the newspaper every day and from what I've

read, we've become a synonym for an unwelcoming and intolerant town. Naturally, it doesn't bring you much joy to see the name of the town you've been living in for the past fifty years dragged through the mud. I'd swear by the people who live here - they're decent, hard-working people. The main problem is that nobody actually asks them what they think. Nobody cares about our opinion. I've got nothing against handicapped people, they have to live somewhere, but I completely understand the people who are concerned. Ask them yourself what they're worried about! If I had a daughter and some sort of guy like that was milling about...I don't think I'd be able to get any peaceful sleep. The main problem is that nobody actually asks us what we think!

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: "It is not true that our clients aren't used to moving around towns. Some walk alone, others with staff, because they could make a wrong turn and get lost or because they'd have trouble communicating in shops or offices. They're not dangerous...for example, we have two apartments in regular high-density housing. Each apartment houses four clients who share the responsibility over their household. Some of them are retirement-age, the younger ones go to work...We only take in those who can get along with others, communicate and follow some basic rules. That's the sort of clients who would be moving in there, too."

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: "Only recently have we been able to make some progress on the issue and break through the silence. Some of our fellow citizens have long been expressing their concerns and questions regarding the project, but they were too afraid to come out publicly. Our appeal to the council encouraged many to speak openly. Even so, some of our questions remain

unanswered and we're awaiting the final decision. I have children, I'm not built for this kind of uncertainty. The whole affair has brought much chaos into our community!"

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: "I'm an optimistic man. I still have hope that we'll get to build community housing in that town, although I've been quite taken aback by the reaction from the townsfolk. After so many negotiations and so much information from other towns where similar facilities have been operating without any issues for years, I would have expected more support, even despite all the negative reactions from a subset of the locals. But I'm not taking it personally and I'm always ready to answer any questions and provide further good examples to combat prejudice. Disabled adults can live joyful and comfortable lives. For that, they not only need respect and privacy, but also the occasional assistance of others. In sheltered housing, these conditions are met to the letter. People have a household to look after, they decide for themselves what to do or what to eat. They get visits from skilled social workers or therapists who are available to them when their help is needed and who watch over them from afar to ensure that everything is running smoothly.

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Committee on Petitions: "I feel a responsibility to help people put their dissatisfaction into words. They consult with me and share their concerns. I have plenty of my own things to worry about, but I could not ignore it any longer, especially since I share the same concerns. My girl would be going home from school and I wouldn't know if she'd get home safely."

Journalist: Local Resident Ms. Lida

Local Resident Ms. Lída: Wait a second, I'll put my bags down. Many of the locals could use some professional assistance themselves. I continuously marvel at what some people keep spewing even though I thought I knew them well and we saw each other every day. I guess you can't tell such things from everyday encounters. It completely changed my view of this town...They've already visited me twice and I told them that if they come a third time and ask me to sign, I'm going to throw them out and never speak to them again. One of my granddaughters is on the spectrum, another other one has ADHD like every other kid these days and I don't view them differently because of it. It's not like I want to get them out of sight and out of mind.

Journalist: Local Resident

Local Resident: I grab the newspaper and what do I see? Once again, our town is on the front page! They said the plan is to start building in spring, that they're just waiting to get the new plot approved. What nonsense! We know nothing about the new location. The town hall keeps saying that the construction has been halted and that they're negotiating over moving the project to a different town! When the GP's office was moving, it took years because they said there was no suitable space. But when it's a project of the regional council, there's suddenly space!

Journalist: Local Resident L. M.

Local Resident L. M.: "In retrospect, I regret not going with a petition from the very start, because it needlessly made things drag on longer. After submitting the appeal, other citizens contacted me asking if they could add their signatures. Just like me, they were convinced that the issue stemmed from a lack of information. I personally spoke to Ms. Metterová and Mr. Roubek. I even went to the regional council to talk to Mr. Lapal and Ms. Treflová. But they just keep referring me to each other. Even though the...the

regional council methodology states that they should inform us from the get-go. Which didn't happen. When a new road was being built some time ago, the mayor came to us and she explained everything and asked us for our opinion. They're building a multi-purpose community building close by and the mayor came to us in advance to show us the proposals. But in this case, we only learned about it from the newspaper. At a point when basically had already been decided, to boot!

Journalist: Child's Fear

Child's Fear: I dreamed that I'm walking past the building and those people are walking in the garden - some of them had more arms than normal, some had none; I'm scared they'll notice me, but I can't stop looking. Then they ask me to get them some things at the grocery store, that nobody lets them in there because they look different. I don't tell mom and get them the groceries. They tell me that their elevator broke down and all of them have to sleep downstairs because they can't climb the stairs without assistance. Those who can't fit in the hallway sleep outside. Sleeping bags and mats along with their personal things lay scattered all around.

Journalist: Architect

Architect: The building is equipped with an elevator, all staircases have ramps, corridors are equipped with seats and handrails. If we had had more time, I still would have redone the ground plan - the original plan was for something more expressive. The assignment had to be completed on extremely short notice. I was told that it needed to be approved quickly after which we would have time to do some minor alterations and finish up the details. I sent them my proposal under the assumption that it would be an internal document unavailable to the public. I'm not very pleased with the result and the same goes for the overall communication process. The project was frustrating for several of the involved parties. The resulting decision only deepened these

frustrations. I'm overwhelmed with work and have no time for unprofitable projects like these!

Journalist: Child's Fear

Child's fear: I look at myself in the mirror to see if I'm different. Mom told me I'm crazy, that I'm never going to fit in here. I was given a bag full of petitions and told to distribute them around town. Mom doesn't know I left a bunch of them at Jitka's house and that I didn't distribute all of them - that would've taken all week!

Journalist: Architect

Architect: The building haunts me in my sleep. I'm walking through a hallway and, suddenly, I'm upside down. I keep walking for a bit, but then I start feeling nauseous. I've had that since I was a kid: I can't be upside down. Then they want me to redo the plans, so I try to do it, but I keep dropping things. I can't manage to hold my pencil. The lighting in the building is malfunctioning, a light bulb is flickering above the staircase landing. The lady who lives on the ground floor is complaining that her drainage isn't working and her neighbor's walls are damp. There's nobody else, so I have to deal with it myself. An inspection reveals that the stairs were not built at the correct angle and that the ramp there is going to be too steep. I have to pay a fine, all the needed changes will be at my expense. They present me with a floor plan I supposedly drew myself, but I can't read it properly.

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: I had a dream that the locals were pushing into the town hall, most of them are people I know, but they don't seem to hear me - as if they were in some sort of trance. I explain to them that the final decision had not yet been reached and that there will be space for them to express their opinions. They don't listen to me.

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: A number of local residents are opposed the sheltered housing. The neighbors in particular were strongly against it. As a result, we're considering finding a more suitable location somewhere in the region. We had already bought the original plot of land from the town. So far, the regional council has invested roughly 1.6 million Czech crowns in the project. It is possible that the town will offer us a different plot in exchange for the current one. That would be one solution. For many locals, however, the idea of having sheltered housing anywhere in the town is still unacceptable. We have not yet reached a final agreement. We also have a number of options for how we could use the original plot. But perhaps it would be better to build this facility in a location that is more suitable. I believe we could build the housing somewhere where it wouldn't cause such negative reactions. At the moment, however, it isn't clear where that would be.

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: We're currently building replacement housing for eight of our clients in another village. This housing will, among others, serve Eva N., who is 64 years old. From a young age, she's lived in various institutions and spent some time living with her sister.

Journalist: She'll be living in the new house with Eliška N. They're both looking forward to having more freedom than they had previously - for example, they'll be able to cook whatever they like for themselves. Another apartment is to be shared by Adolf P. and Zdeněk Š. They've been practicing their cooking skills in a test kitchen. All of them are scheduled to move to the new location in January. There will be a social worker with them at all times.

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: Our property department will offer the plot for sale in a public tender. We've received some new offers. None of them, however, came from the mayors of nearby towns. Several private owners offered their properties in the county and the regional council has entered into negotiations with them.

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: I've been copying the petition sheets and, so far, it seems that people are interested and want to join. It's meant to express disagreement with the plans for new housing for people who need medical assistance. I've got a family, children. I'm doing it in my free time.

Journalist: Local Resident

Local Resident: Knowing what I know today, I admit that I wouldn't have signed it and just dealt with the matter solely on the level of comments on the construction procedure.

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: As a mother, I cannot approve of this project...

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: "Given the current situation, I believe it is not appropriate to continue with the project in the current location."

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: There had been no communication from the regional council.

Journalist: Regional Council

Regional Council: Sheltered housing for disabled clients has been operating in other parts of the region for years without any issues.

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: They told me about it last October.

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: "From a personal point of view, I'm disappointed and saddened by the fact that some people think this way. I don't get it."

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: Nobody told us anything. We have nothing against the handicapped.

Journalist: Local Resident L. M.

Local Resident L. M.: "The biggest issue is the lack of information about this project. The idea strikes me like a decision from behind a desk. In my opinion, for a town our size, they should have started with a smaller-scale project and only then moved towards building two giant houses. Nobody's seems to care how the building will be fenced. Nobody cares about our safety! We have no idea what sort of people will be living there!"

Journalist: Director of the Sheltered Housing

Director of the Sheltered Housing: The Czech Republic is currently unable to offer its disabled citizens individual housing and instead tries to solve their situation through a system of long-term housing services. It's a compromise between their rights, historical legacy and the economic situation of the country. However, an absolutely essential aspect of this compromise is that it needs to be clear that they are being provided housing, not being institutionalized.

The regional council's plan to organize round tables with the citizens and spreading awareness ahead of the arrival of their new disabled neighbors is certainly not a bad idea. It's good to deal with prejudice in advance, in good faith and in a long-term way. But if a community gets stuck in irrational resistance and starts spreading rumors about kids being in danger at the playgrounds, the regional council should not give way to such nonsense. If we accept the idea that the old-time locals have the right to decide who will and won't be their neighbor, we are inevitably saying that disabled people aren't like us!

Journalist: Local Resident Ms. Lída

Local Resident Ms. Lída: The petition had been making rounds ever before the informational meeting of citizens and representatives with people from the regional government and the institution. As a result, all sorts of rumors and nonsense about what sort of dangerous people will be housed there started quickly spreading around town.

Journalist: Mayor

Mayor: I believe that housing for the handicapped will be built here. That's something we never opposed – we were mainly just upset that nobody had talked to us about it earlier. That was the main issue for us.

Journalist: The regional council president met with the town officials on Thursday. According to both him and the mayor M. H., the conflict was a misunderstanding caused by a lack of information. The regional council president believes that the regional council and the town hall had cleared things up.

Journalist: Representative of the Petition Committee

Representative of the Petition Committee: The public sees us in a negative light mostly due to certain media outlets and commenters on social media who don't care about

our arguments and objective reasoning. I find it unfortunate that the town residents had been so unjustly condemned by so many people.

Journalist: Tense emotions. It is becoming increasingly clear that the main issue between the two parties stemmed from a lack of mutual communication. The situation is becoming increasingly heated. The regional council reacted to the municipal council's decision to withdraw their initial land-use approval by demanding that the council state a clear opinion and by cancelling their planned discussion with the town residents. The municipal council changed their decision because a number of residents opposed the idea. Even the regional council president admitted that communication had been conducted poorly. Last Friday, we asked the regional council's spokeswoman to explain how the town had been informed about their plan to build a facility for disabled people. As of Thursday evening, we have yet to receive a statement. Representatives of the petition committee wish to provide no further comments on their initiative. According to them, the past few days were more about emotions than facts. That is one of the reasons for why they are waiting for the results of negotiations with the regional council will be. At the current moment, there is nobody to interview and gather information from.