

City considers complaints involving code violations

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But for some residents, the verdict is still out in the continuing concerns over code and zoning violations in Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights. "They are putting it all back on us," said Ida Ranesbottom, association secretary.

Though Countegan and his staff want to meet with the association, Ranesbottom said the association's board itself must meet first.

"We're going to discuss how we will respond," said Ranesbottom, who has lead the association's recent push on the city to clear up blight in the southeastern sections.

Homeowners want action. But action takes time and patience, according to city officials.

CITY STAFF acknowledged the helpfulness of photos provided by Ranesbottom showing code and zoning violations, they say addresses could be equally helpful.

Zoning and code inspector Dennis Handt, who is assigned the area, says he has to drive up and down streets looking for the complaints. "I am the one who has to see the (commercial) vehicles. I have to prove they are at a specific property for a reason."

Commercial vehicles parked in driveways or yards are the biggest code complaint among Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights homeowners. Photos were taken to show city officials the type of violations the area faces.

"We've given them addresses. We are going through their list of violations. Most are what we wanted in to them. There is a same address on the three lists," Ranesbottom said.

Handt said: "We don't receive a lot of calls. But now we are with the warmer weather and all the publicity."



Dennis Handt
inspector

Countegan and Handt say the process of getting a commercial vehicle removed, for example, is lengthy, unless the violator complies without having a ticket issued.

RANDT SAYS he begins the process with what he calls a 10-day soft notice. "I try to talk to people." If the resident does not do what is requested, Handt sends a 10-day hard notice. After that a ticket is given.

"We are not here to give out tickets. We are here to resolve things before it gets to a ticket," Handt said.

In one case, however, a boat parked illegally in the area remains despite a \$125 fine ordered by the 4th District Court. "He promised the judge he would remove it. It's still there. He will be getting another ticket."

But a district court judge has no injunctive power. A circuit court does.

"If it is chronic and habitual, then

we do proceed with other means. Circuit court is one of them. We try to do a lot of people discussion rather than just writing tickets," Countegan said.

Of the roughly 10,000 code and zoning violation inspections conducted throughout the city last year, 164 district court tickets were issued, Countegan said.

If city staff played hardball, there would be an equal number of complaints from residents about how they were treated. "Maybe we haven't been quick and tough to get action. On the other hand, we have tried to work with difficult situations," Countegan said.

RANESBOTTOM SAYS that while she understands the legal process to be time consuming and lengthy, she and other residents want to see some toughness. "Take them to court. Let the court deal with them. (Retired) Judge (Michael) Hand used to work with us. We will go as far as writing letters to a judge if it will help."

"We do understand there are time lines. But things shouldn't take two years and some of these things have been going on two years," Ranesbottom said.

Old Town resident Massie Kurzeja, an association member, agreed. "If the crime is big enough... When you have people who repeatedly violate, yea, take them to the circuit court."

Some complaints of violations the association gave the city council almost two years ago when they asked for help — which led to block grant money being used to help pay for a code enforcement officer — still remain, Ranesbottom said.

City officials say that a majority of the complaints have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed.

Some areas have been cleared

By Joanne Mollazowski
staff writer

Some Farmington Hills officials wanted to make it clear that code violations shown in a photograph in the Monday, April 20, Observer have been cleaned up.

The photo — one of many provided by Ida Ranesbottom, secretary of the Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights Homeowners Association — were taken the week before the area's last snowstorm in March or a few days later.

Dennis Handt, a Farmington Hills zoning and code

inspector assigned to the Old Town-Meadowbrook Heights area, said the violations, which included debris around the back of the building on Grand River, were cleaned up about four weeks ago.

"They were sent a notice. They had 10 days to clean it up. They complied. I know it's not perfect," Handt said, looking around the area.

Glad the area is cleaned up, Ranesbottom also says it's an example of how violations are addressed in their

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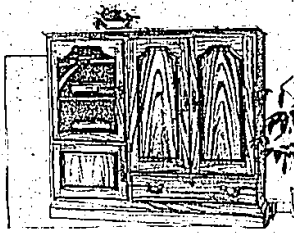
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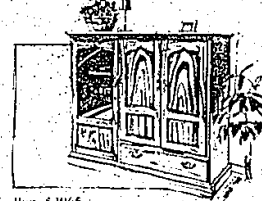
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