



San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 10, 2018
Contact: Chief Deputy City Attorney Mike Giorgino at
mgiorgino@sandiego.gov or (619) 533-5886

Court Orders Receiver for Bay Ho Hoarder House *City Attorney's Office obtains relief for neighbors and help for elderly couple*

The City Attorney's Office obtained a court order on Thursday to begin the clean-up of huge piles of trash at a hoarder house in the Bay Ho neighborhood. A receiver will oversee renovations and offer counseling, therapy, or treatment services to the property owners.

Concerned neighbors called the City's Code Enforcement Division to report that an elderly couple were living in the backyard of their Forney Street home under deplorable conditions. City inspectors found large piles of trash, junk, rubbish, waste, and debris inside the dwelling and all over the yard. Inspectors found feral cats and skunks amidst the piles of debris and neighbors complained of opossums, as well. The home owners admitted that they had been living in a camper shell in the backyard and in a recreational vehicle parked on the street for over 5 years. There was simply too much trash to even enter the residence.

The male property owner is a 79-year old Vietnam Veteran. His wife is 76 years old and uses a wheelchair. Both suffer from multiple medical conditions. They used portable toilets outside, took sponge baths in the backyard, and cooked outdoors on a portable stove because their home was no longer habitable. Inspectors could crack open the front door only enough to observe severe water damage to the ceiling and interior drywall beyond the piles of debris.

In January 2018, the City ordered the property owners to vacate and repair their property. Multiple subsequent inspections showed they were unable or unwilling to rehabilitate their home. On July 10, 2018, the City Attorney's Office filed a complaint for appointment of a receiver and abatement of the public nuisance. On Thursday, August 9, 2018, San Diego Superior Court Judge Eddie C. Sturgeon signed the attached order, placing the property under the care of a receiver who will oversee the clean-up and repairs and offer treatment services to the elderly homeowners. (Please see the attached Notice, Complaint and Order.)

“Compulsive hoarding is often a cry for help,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“I commend the Bay Ho community members who cared enough to report their concerns to the City. By intervening, we brought peace of mind to the impacted neighbors and needed resources to this elderly couple.”**

This case was prosecuted by Deputy City Attorney Onu Omordia.

The City will recover the costs of rehabilitation, cleanup, attorney fees, and receiver fees from the property owners.

Recent City Attorney media releases can be accessed on the San Diego City Attorney's home page located on the Internet at <https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney>

1200 Third Avenue, Suite 1620, San Diego, California 92101-4188 (619) 236-6220

The City Attorney's [Nuisance Abatement Unit](#), previously titled the Code Enforcement Unit, was established in 1984 to address nuisance properties and blight throughout San Diego. This unit works in partnership with the Code Enforcement Division of the City Development Services Department, the San Diego Police Department, other local agencies, and the community to identify and aggressively address problem properties.

Since 2015, the Nuisance Abatement Unit has filed nine other health and safety receiverships with the court. These cases also involved substandard housing violations, public nuisance and extreme hoarding conditions. In the past, the City would pay to abate the violations, costing taxpayers thousands of dollars, and then seek a lien against the property. With receivership actions, the City does not spend any money abating the nuisance. Instead, the property is rehabilitated using funds borrowed from the equity in the property. The City may also collect all costs of prosecution, including attorney's fees and investigative costs.

Community members may report code, health and safety and environmental violations to the City Attorney's Nuisance Abatement Unit at 619-533-5655.

###

The attached photos taken between January and February 2018 are courtesy of the City of San Diego's Code Enforcement Division.