

No more chances: Highway House in Godfrey to close

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - After finding numerous code violations more than a year ago, the **Village of Godfrey** is finally telling the **Highway House** to go.

Godfrey Building and Zoning Director Laura Dixon walked the premises with the **Godfrey Fire Department**, a health inspector, an electrician and a plumber a year and a half ago. Dixon said they discovered code violations, which presented clear and present dangers to anyone staying within the structure, located on Godfrey Road.

"We did a walk-through and found numerous violations," she said. "There was bad electrical work and no smoke detectors. There were inside doors locked in a way where people couldn't get out if there was a fire. There was improper storage of flammable materials, and an empty pool, which was not taped off. We took it to the board and got it condemned."

When the building was condemned, however, Dixon said the village allowed the owners of the establishment to repair the problems. Dixon said the main building with eight rooms for rent was soon reopened. The bottom floor of an additional building was opened not long after the reopening of the main building. After those improvements, Dixon said the progress has stopped.

"It's like we take one step forward and 10 back," she said. "They disconnected the phone system, which disconnected the smoke alarms. I gave them 24 hours to get it fixed, and they finally got someone to repair the system within 40 minutes of that deadline. I felt like a babysitter, because it seemed like daily I would have to do something there."

Some of the "repairs" made included filling the former pool, without first removing the pool, Dixon said. Two additional buildings were also deemed to be structurally unsound by a structural engineer. Dixon said those buildings would need to be completely rebuilt. Currently only 15 of the 65 possible rooms are safe to rent.



Aside from the code and structural issues, Dixon said the property has been a nuisance for the village and police.

"It has been a nuisance in the past, and that hasn't changed in the last two years," she said. "They are not moving forward. It's putting people in harm's way with drug-dealing and stuff like that."

Dixon said she is taking the matter to the village attorney and the village board. She said they will coordinate a way to evict the people currently making a home in the motel without tossing them into the street.

"We will give everyone in those rooms plenty of time to get out," she said. "We are working on a 10-day process. We are not going to make people live on the streets because we closed out where they're staying."

After evictions, Dixon said the village will work on demolishing the business.

"It's sad to see a business get to this point, but we've given them every opportunity to bring things back to code," she said. "We can't just sit back and wait for something really bad to happen."

A call was placed by Riverbender.com to the Highway House for comment, but the phone line had been disconnected.