

# Hiway House set to be vacated in 10 days

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**GODFREY** - Residents of the Hiway House on Godfrey Road now have 10 days to vacate the premises on a judge's order.

Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick said he is pleased with the Madison County judge's decision, and hopes it is indicative of a later decision to demolish the property, which McCormick said has been problematic to the village for as long as 12 years. After various attempts to either refurbish or close the business by the village, McCormick said the struggle may soon be over following Tuesday's court case.

"I hope we're on the road to solving the problem permanently," McCormick said Wednesday morning. "We finished the court case yesterday, and the judge has not yet made a decision on it. What please me at the end of the hearing was, 10 days from today, the property needs to be vacated. Enough information was brought to the judge to confirm the place was not able to be rented."

That information was brought by a revolving door of professional witnesses ranging from electricians to health inspectors to the Godfrey fire chief. McCormick said each was questioned by Village of Godfrey Attorney Tom Long, and each testified the Hiway House was an unfit place for people to stay.

"The Village of Godfrey Attorney Tom Long presented a great case with several witnesses," McCormick said. "All of them said it was uninhabitable. The electrical inspector saw several electrical issues, and said almost every room in the place has a possibility of shorting out and even causing electrocutions."

The Godfrey Fire Chief Erik Kambarian said there were no fire blocks between rooms, meaning the rooms could all burn quickly if a fire was to start. Some of the most damning evidence, however, came directly from a Madison County health inspector, who showed disturbing images McCormick said he had not previously seen.

"Health inspectors showed photos I had never seen before of just terrible conditions," he said. "There was mold, mold all over the place. It was in terrible, terrible shape. I'm not a doctor, so I can't say anything or confirm this, but I heard the health inspector say if someone didn't have asthma before staying there, the mold could give it to them."

McCormick said the village originally granted leniency to the motel, saying the village wanted to work with them to ensure the business could keep opened in Godfrey.

"We're not in the business of putting businesses out of business," McCormick said. "We're in the business of attracting businesses."

Formerly, the village worked with the Hiway House to help it be compliant. Structural engineers, electricians and plumbers went into the building in an attempt to make it able to continue its business. When work was done, however, McCormick said it was done wrong, and was usually undergone just before the deadline given by the village.

"None of the work was being done right," he said. "The electrical work was being done by people who had no idea what they were doing. When we told them to fill-in the swimming pool, they filled it with plants. Most things were done at the last moment."

While Mayor McCormick is not happy with how long this ordeal has been for the village, he said he finally has hope it can reach a much-needed conclusion in the coming days.