



Madison County cleaning up properties using code enforcement

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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County is focusing on cleaning up properties as it sweeps communities for code violations.

Chief Deputy Administrator of Planning and Development Chris Doucleff, who oversees the county's code enforcement, and Code Enforcement Officer Wayne Brendel, went through the Forest Homes subdivision of Cottage Hills on Wednesday moving house to house citing property owners for code violations.

"We are out here showing residents we care what their community looks like," Doucleff said.

The county issued 30 citations for everything from poorly maintained properties to derelict vehicles.

"We have areas in the county that are looked at in a certain way and mainly it's due to how people maintain their property," Doucleff said. "No one wants to live next door to a junky property."

Doucleff said this was the second community the county "swept" during the past four months. He said in August they inspected State Park and a total of 88 violations were issued with fines for transgressions.

Some of the violations included junk and debris on property, high grass and weeds, unlicensed and inoperable vehicles, illegal burning, keeping of chickens and horses without special use permit and general property maintenance.

Since August, 80 of the code violation citations issued were brought into compliance. Yards were cleared of junk and debris, grass and weeds cut and cleared, houses were brought up to code and at least one structure demolished.

The county is working with property owners on the eight remaining code violators and what can be done to remedy the problems.

In November, Doucleff and Brendel made a second sweep in State Park and 16 new violations were found, including one for State Park Fire District, which owns a derelict house it once used for live burns for firefighter training.

“We cited them and are requesting the house be demolished,” Doucleff said.

Doucleff said resident complaints led them to prioritize what areas needed “swept.”

“Even people we cited acknowledged the sweeps were warranted,” Doucleff said. “People are taking pride in their community once again.”

Doucleff said the operations were conducted “with the highest respect for human dignity, which was front and center.”

County Board member James Futrell said since being elected he knows the county has received complaints about Forest Homes. He said the code violations place a burden on Wood River Township as well as Cottage Hills Fire Department.

“I know last spring there were some safety concerns with people illegally dumping in ditches and water backing up in basements,” Future said.

Doucleff said this was the first sweep in Forest Homes and they would be returning in the future. He said the citations were issued for a three block area.

Futrell said that he hopes that through the county’s efforts residents become more proactive in maintaining their property rather than reactive.

“We want this to be a community effort,” he said.

Doucleff said one of the most important jobs for code enforcement is to protect public safety and quality of life in the community. The county has one code enforcement officer, Brendel, to inspect and evaluate properties in the unincorporated areas of Madison County.

“The code sweeps will become a regular event in random county neighborhoods,” Doucleff said. “This is an effort by the county to help address problems and prevent blighting.”