



San Diego City Attorney Jan I. Goldsmith

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Gina Coburn, Communications Director: (619) 533-6181

CITY ATTORNEY PROSECUTES OWNERS OF ABANDONED RAT INFESTED REMODEL *Owners sentenced in criminal case brought by the Code Enforcement Unit*

On June 10, 2010, Superior Court Commissioner Witham sentenced the owners of a rat-infested, partially-built remodel to 375 days in custody and ordered them to pay court fines of \$14,750. Owners Ronald and Antonia Ramirez can avoid custody and a majority of the fines if they substantially comply with all terms and conditions of their probation in a timely manner as determined by the court. The sentence came after the couple pleaded no contest to 15 counts of violating the City's code enforcement regulations at 6295 Scimitar Drive, San Diego which had become a severe longstanding nuisance to the surrounding neighborhood. The owners had abandoned the remodel project of a single family home, which had become a harborage for rats. The resulting eyesore included an abundance of debris, miscellaneous storage, unpermitted construction, and encroachments in the public right-of-way. Now the owners are under court order to either demolish the structures and remove all debris from the property, or complete the full construction and rehabilitation of the structures in accordance with City permits and timelines. All other code violations must also be corrected. The owners own two other properties in San Diego.

Aggressive criminal action was taken after community members reported that they had been affected by the nuisance property for approximately four years. "It is not acceptable to maintain a residential property in a condition that threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Property owners bear the responsibility to keep their properties in good repair and in compliance with the City's land use regulations," said Deputy City Attorney Markecia Simmons.

Charges alleged in the criminal complaint included harboring vermin, failure to obtain needed permits for electrical and plumbing work, the debris left on the lot, and maintaining unpermitted construction and encroachments in the public right-of-way.

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Agencies that worked in cooperation on this case included the City Attorney's Office, San Diego's Neighborhood Code Compliance Division, and the County Department of Environmental Health.

This case was brought by the City Attorney's Code Enforcement Unit which was established in 1984 to address problem properties and code violations throughout San Diego. The Unit works in partnership with the City's Neighborhood Code Compliance Division, the Police, and the community to identify and aggressively address problem properties. Community members can report property violations to the Neighborhood Code Compliance Division at 619-236-5500.

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