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City Seeking to Shut Down Drug Trafficking ‘Home Base’

Public input led to initial investigation of notorious west side apartment complex

COLUMBUS, OH—Based upon community complaints that quickly led to an undercover police investigation, Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. announced today that the City of Columbus is seeking a civil injunction to board up a west side apartment complex known as a “one-stop shop” for the purchase, sale, and use of heavy narcotics.

A hearing for preliminary injunction against the owners of the complex, located at 596-602 South Hague Avenue, is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Monday, July 25, 2016 in the Franklin County Environmental Court.

If granted by the court, the injunction would allow the city to evacuate and board up all or part of the premises until a hearing for permanent injunction could be held. If the property is ultimately declared to be a statutorily defined public nuisance, state law grants the court authority to order the premises shut down for up to one year.

“We’re making a concerted effort to target these types of drug havens, whether they are hotels or multi-unit apartment complexes,” said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. “I want the public to know how important their tips are, especially in this instance, in helping us build strong cases based upon the preponderance of evidence.”

Following up on a June 2, 2016 community complaint, Columbus Police Division narcotics detectives made covert purchases of crack-cocaine and heroin from 598 S. Hague Ave. on June 14 and June 16. A subsequent search warrant identified the following inside the premises: suboxone strips and Narcan (used for the emergency treatment of opioid overdoses); 22 grams of marijuana; two grams of heroin; six grams of crack-cocaine; a .40 caliber semi-automatic hand-gun reported stolen from Delaware, Ohio; magazine and caliber rounds.

On June 21, Columbus Police sent owners Glenn and Patricia Thompson a certified letter to notify them of the nuisance drug activity occurring at their property. The certified mail receipt was signed by Mr. Thompson.

The following day, narcotics detectives participated in a covert purchase of 13.2 grams of crack-cocaine at the premises. On June 26, another covert purchase of crack-cocaine at the premises took place.

Another search warrant was executed on June 29, wherein the following was found: suboxone and Lidocaine (an anesthetic known to be used to “cut” heroin); 2.2 grams of heroin; 2.8 grams of crack-cocaine; 1.2 grams of cocaine; 314.4 grams of marijuana; pills; a syringe with blood on it; a .9mm semi-automatic hand-gun; magazines, live rounds, and “miscellaneous ammunition”; and various amounts of cash.

While executing the search warrant, narcotics detectives met on-site with the owners, who again signed a letter acknowledging that nuisance drug activity was occurring at their property.

According to reports, police continued to receive community complaints about the apartment complex after June 29.

“In conjunction with any parallel criminal cases, we’re hoping that our nuisance abatement efforts will send a strong message that Columbus won’t tolerate rampant criminal activity operating out of apartment complexes,” said Assistant City Attorney Kristen Dickerson. “We would prefer that the owners work with the city to clean up their properties voluntarily, but when they don’t we are ready to take action.”

In order to secure closure of the apartment complex, Dickerson, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the west side of Columbus, is seeking to prove that the Thompsons are guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that they, as owners of the premises, “knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance” as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

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