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Southampton ponders house's demolition following complaints

By CATHERINE BAUM
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SOUTHAMPTON - A Brickyard Road home could be demolished after town officials discovered structural problems and safety hazards on site, alerted by complaints from neighbors.

Michael Wojtowicz, of 178 Brickyard Road, was evicted July 6, town health agent Joshua Mathieu said, following multiple complaints.

In November the Highway Department cleaned the property in about 10 days, clearing out trash, four vehicles, refrigerators, stoves, mattresses, couches and trailer boxes, filling about 28 40-yard containers, according to Highway Department Superintendent Edward Cauley.

The debris was disposed in a Connecticut landfill. The bulk of the cleanup bill was \$20,000 for transporting the waste, Cauley said, and the remaining \$6,000 includes the department's labor, fuel and equipment.

"This is something we normally wouldn't do," Cauley said. "It was a lot of trash - I mean a lot."

A structural inspection of Wojtowicz's home was recently completed by an engineer he hired, according to his court-appointed attorney Meade Burrows. Burrows noted the report has not been completed yet.

"The state is not interested in having him homeless, but we're concerned about the safety of the building," Burrows said.

A report next month is expected to reveal whether the home must be demolished or whether it can be brought up to code.

After Burrows reviews the structural report, anticipated to be in "any week now," he said he will make a proposal to the town.

Meanwhile, Cauley said he passed the \$26,391 cleanup bill to selectmen Tuesday. Wojtowicz and the Board of Health met on Nov. 3 and Nov. 10 in housing court, where the two sides agreed the town would clean and remove the debris from the exterior of the property and levy a lien on the property for expenses associated with the cleanup.

The property was inspected prior to Wojtowicz's eviction and then again on Aug. 1 by the building inspector, fire chief, wiring inspector, Board of Health and plumbing inspector. At issue was the building's failure to provide electrical facilities and lighting, failure to provide adequate exits and failure to provide plumbing, heating and gas-burning facilities as required by law, according to the inspection report by District Health Officer Charles Kaniecki. Structural defects, failure to provide a smoke detector and accumulation of garbage and filth were also listed.

"I found the overall condition of this property to be extremely hazardous not only to anyone living in this building but to anyone who would have to go into this facility in the event of an emergency," Fire Chief Stephen Hyde stated in the report.

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Wojtowicz was instructed by the Board of Health to clean the property multiple times before he was evicted, according to board member Maureen Groden.

"This has been on the radar for a long time," Groden said.

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