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Council Orders Nuisance to be Addressed

By Sophie Braccini

Attorney Mark McLaughlin, representing the Alothman family that owns the house at 316 Calle La Montana in Moraga, appeared before the Moraga Town Council on January 13th to ward off abatement proceedings against the house that was declared a nuisance last October.

The house, located in the beautiful Campolindo neighborhood, has been unoccupied for years. It has degraded over time. Four years ago after a similar threat by the Town, the owners, who reside in Kuwait, had the roof replaced. They failed to remove the car and furniture that still linger on the property and since then the house has been further vandalized.

According to Julie Herrington, whose family lives nearby, the house has become a place for teenagers to throw parties. The Town's staff is concerned over the mold and general squalor of the house, which could represent a health hazard.

McLaughlin explained to the Town that it was more reasonable to trust his clients to abate the condition themselves within 30 days, saving the Town the expense. A list of seven actions that need to be taken was given to the owner. But the Council was ready to get tougher with an owner who, according to Council Member Mike Metcalf, has been taking the Council for a ride. "What can we do as a town to stop this abuse?" he asked.

For Council Member Trotter, the simple removal of filth and boarding of the house will not remedy the problem. He suggested that the house needs to be returned to a habitable state, to solve the situation permanently. The Council agreed, and a resolution was drafted that mandates the owner to comply with the 7 elements of the abatement list within 30 days, and hire a contractor that will restore the house to a selling or renting stage within six months. Monthly reviews by staff are required under the resolution.

Neighbors expressed satisfaction with the Council's firm stand. If the owner does not comply, the Town will take further action.

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