

Neighborhood Grapevine

News from the City of Milwaukee's
Department of Neighborhood Services



Richard Weller is questioned by a Ch. 12 reporter regarding lack of payments for code violations.

Investigation nets City \$19,453 in back code fines from Bayside landlord

A fatal shooting at a north-west side apartment complex triggered intense media attention and a response by City agencies that ultimately led to a Bayside landlord paying up past due court fines and a change of ownership at the troubled complex where the homicide occurred.

Milwaukee police responded to a murder at the property located in the 6300 block of W. Florist Ave. this spring. Neighbors upset with conditions at the property called their alderman for action and held a protest.

DNS was called in to re-inspect the 16-unit complex for code violations. The landlord, Richard Weller of Bayside, said he was assaulted at the complex in winter and feared going back. As a result, the situation got out of hand as over 170 code violations were cited.

Richard Weller is no stranger to state and local code enforcement authorities. In the 1980's Weller was convicted under state charges of renting out condemned property and other illegal rental practices. The State assessed fines nearing \$100,000 which Weller plea

Weller pays up see page 2



Mayor Barrett, Commissioner Collins, Alderman D'Amato and Assistant City Attorney Unora along with University officials and area residents explain the "sting" at a press conference at UW-Milwaukee.

DNS "Sting" results in 10 landlords offering illegal rooming houses for rent

Ten landlords are now facing citations for offering to rent their property to four or more unrelated persons without a rooming house license. Making such an offer is now prosecutable due to an ordinance change this summer.

Limited parking, excessive noise and litter are just some of the problems created by illegal rooming houses. The East side of Milwaukee, especially the area around UWM, has been plagued with over crowding problems for years. Additionally, owner occupancy rates in the area have steadily dropped in the last decade indicating the problem is worsening.

The Department of Neighborhood Services has a difficult time prosecuting overcrowding because the victim is typically evicted as a cure. The department realized a better solution must be created that would stop the illegal activity before the tenant took occupancy.

In April 2004 a survey was conducted to measure the degree of the problem. Nearly half of the landlords contacted illegally offered to rent to four or more unrelated adults. Unfortunately, this evidence alone was not enough to prosecute the

Rooming House see page 2

Pictures from the field:



Shape of Things to come? What's wrong with this picture? What's crawling out of this washing machine?

Answer: The Department of Neighborhood service answers 35,000 complaints a year. In those complaints we see some very strange sights. This "Ice Snake" took a double take. The heat was shut off and the water leaked into the wash machine. The steel shaft froze quicker than the basin and inch by inch the "Ice Snake" slithered up the shaft and out the top of the washer. Just one of the many fascinating sights our inspectors encounter in the field. If you have a heat complaint, call DNS at 286-2268. ☺



BEAT THE RUSH! BUY A HUSH!

That's the holiday safety message that Santa (Bill Jaworski) and the Safety Elf (Sharon Blando) presented at a media event at the Survive Alive House. Kids from Woodlands elementary school show off their detectors.

Beginning in September of 2005, all smoke detectors within 20 feet of a primary cooking appliance will need to be of the HUSH type. Hush detectors can be disabled at the touch of a button and then re-set 15 minutes later. The code change hopes to curb the fatal consequences of people dis-arming their detector because of cooking smoke. This ordinance will impact most 1 and 2-family homes in Milwaukee.

Another new ordinance will require landlords or their agents, to physically test the detectors to see that they work. Owners will be required to keep a record of the annual test. An informational and educational campaign about the changes will take place before the law takes effect. (Hint-A hush-type detector would be a great stocking stuffer this holiday!) ☺

Illegal Rooming House from Page 1

landlords. After a brainstorming session between DNS and the city attorney, an addition to the code was created. The code now focuses on the offer to rent. Therefore, DNS does not have to prove a landlord is unlawfully occupying a building, only that they offered to. If the landlord "offers to rent", a citation can be issued. The ordinance is fashioned after the prostitution model which prosecutes simply for an offer to prostitute.

In July when the code became effective a "sting operation" began. Ten landlords were netted in the sting.

Those owners cited are:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Violation Address</u>
1. 2953 F, LLC (Miloslav Nezval RA)	Milwaukee	2955 N. Frederick Ave.
2. Jeffery J. Anderson	Milwaukee	3436 N. Downer Ave.
3. Fox Properties, LLC (Fabio Romersi RA)	Bayside	2734 N. Murray Ave.
4. Sanford B. Parsons	Milwaukee	703 E. Locust St.
5. George H. Redo, Jr.	Milwaukee	2908 N. Prospect Ave
6. Christopher M. Lukach	Milwaukee	2589 N. Murray Ave.
7. Wendy Wasserman	Milwaukee	3278-80 N. Hackett Ave.
8. David Wilson	Milwaukee	2228 E. Park Pl.
9. Dr. Mervin R. Smucker	Milwaukee	3274 N. Oakland Ave.
10. Marcy Yavor	Glendale	2421 N. Cramer St.

After the survey in April, the city issued a press release that the city would be cracking down on illegal rooming houses. The press attention seemed to deter many landlords because significantly fewer landlords offered to rent to four unrelated people in the July sting. Therefore it seems the media attention to the problem is a good deterrent. The sting operation, and the media attention it has received, should deter additional landlords from illegal renting practices. DNS will continue the operation. ☺

Weller pays up from Page 1

bargained down to \$50,000 with a 2-year payment plan.

At the time, Weller owed the City over \$20,000 in code fines and was on a \$129 a month payment plan. Had the plan been allowed to continue, the City would have had to wait 13 years to get paid. That was also on top of a \$15,747.24 delinquent tax bill.

While Weller's bills to the City went unpaid, he continued to acquire additional property. A few months before the scrutiny on W. Florist, Weller acquired a 42-unit building on W. Kilbourn Ave. worth over \$500,000. The assessed value in spring of 2004 of Weller's property holdings totalled some \$1.8 million.

Such a high profile case drew the attention of an investigative reporter. John Atwater of Ch. 12 did a report on the Weller history. Municipal court also did some investigating and decided to change its policy on deferred payments.

At the request of Commissioner Collins, in September, Judge James Gramling called in the top abusers of the installment program. The program was modified to end the multi-year extensions. Now defendant's have two years to pay on installments with a balloon payment at the end.

Rather than face a court hearing on the matter, Weller decided to settle his debt with the City and wrote a check for nearly \$20,000. Even while Weller wrote the check, he had 110 code violations on his properties. ☺

Welcome Aboard to New Hires

Charlie Holst (Nuisance Control Officer): Charlie comes to DNS with a variety of retail and service industry experience. He has previously been a Temporary Nuisance Control Officer. Charlie and his wife Tina have three children and five grandchildren. Besides being a member of his church choir, he is an avid painter and enjoys Chinese cooking. He also likes baking, especially breads and cookies.

Doug Berigan (Nuisance Control Officer): A graduate of UW-Milwaukee majoring in Anthropology, Doug has experience as an archeologist. Most recently he has experience as an environmental consultant in the asbestos industry. He has previous experience as a Temporary Nuisance Control Officer. His interests include participation in the Milwaukee Hurling Club and the Shamrock Club (an Irish cultural organization).

Rosemary Wisniewski (Code Enforcement Intern): Rosemary joins DNS after twenty five years as a customer service representative at Conejito's Restaurant. She has two children. Her main interests include dogs, natural health and reading.

Eric Lemmer (Code Enforcement Intern): Eric joins DNS after four years in the United States Marine Corps in the electronics repair field. He spends his time participating in the Milwaukee Hurling Club.

Rob Bates (Code Enforcement Intern): Rob joins DNS after experience as an appliance installation contractor. He and his wife Shannon spend time remodeling their home on the east side. He is also interested in auto racing, specifically the Sports Car Club of America.

Courtney Martin (Temporary Nuisance Control Officer): Courtney comes to DNS with a good deal of experience in non-profit corporations, most recently with Junior Achievement. She is a graduate in Economics from Florida A&M University. In her spare time Courtney enjoys travel and reading.

Tom Kay (Temporary Nuisance Control Officer): Tom joins DNS with experiences gained at the Milwaukee Alliance and the Neighborhood Ambassador Program as well as restaurant and bar management. He is a graduate of the University of New Mexico in Criminology. His interests include running and cycling.

Jenny Weiser (Temporary Nuisance Control Officer): Jenny returns to DNS after several summers as a Temporary Nuisance



New Hires (L-R top of stair Chris Holubowicz, Eric Lemmer, Matt Marciniak, Tom Kay, Robert Bates, Rosemary Wisniewski, Jennifer Weiser, and Courtney Martin,

Control Officer. She has a degree in Mass Communication from UW-Milwaukee and is currently pursuing a degree in the Health Sciences/Medical field at UWM.

Dave Markwardt (Nuisance Control Officer): Dave returns to DNS as a Nuisance Control Officer after year and a half stint as a Police Officer with the Milwaukee Police Department. His main interest is keeping up with his son Danny who is involved in lots of sports.

Chris Holubowicz is a Commercial Enforcement inspectors located downtown. Chris Holubowicz is a new DNS Code Enforcement Intern. He is a graduate of UW-La Crosse with a B.A. in Political Science. Chris is married and the father of two children, Hope and Christopher. His hobbies are golf and fishing.

Matt Marciniak and Bruce Sorenson are new Plumbing Inspector located downtown. Corey Bender is a Environmental Hygienist at Lake Tower and Greg Eighme is a new Construction inspector located downtown. Jim Swanson was hired by DNS as a Construction Inspector working in the Condemnation section. For the previous 20 years he designed and built custom homes working with his son at Southeastern Builders. Proir experience was in the aerospace industry.. ☺



Other new employees and one retirement. (L to R) Jim Friedrichs joined DNS as a Construction Inspector. James Swanson is a Condemnation inspector. Waving good-bye is Larry Govin-Matzat who worked as a Zoning Inspector and was with the department for over 23 years.



Corey Bender is a new Environmental Hygienist at Lake Tower. Greg Eighme is a new Construction Inspector downtown.

New Web Links for City Information

The City of Milwaukee changed its web addresses recently and many old links will no longer work. Here are some of the important web links you should bookmark for future reference. Note that most of the pages now are numbered. As a result, the address for most pages will only be a DocID number change.

MAIN CITY HOME PAGE

<http://www.milwaukee.gov>

PROPERTY INFORMATION LOOK-UP (New Way-Utilizes a convenient street spelling assistant.)

http://itmdapps.ci.mil.wi.us/MyMHome/SearchDB2_prod.jsp

PROPERTY INFORMATION LOOK-UP (Old Way-Familiar interface.)

<http://isdweb1.ci.mil.wi.us/RequestServices/PropertyData.html>

DNS HOME PAGE-Info on DNS

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/display/router.asp?docid=316>

DNS PROPERTY INFORMATION LOOKUP (Only place to find property by Owner's Last Name)

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/display/router.asp?docid=480>

FORMS AND APPLICATIONS FOR DOING BUSINESS WITH DNS

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/display/router.asp?docid=481>

CITY ORDINANCES ON-LINE

<http://www.milwaukee.gov/display/router.asp?docid=1143>



2004 Combined Giving Results

I want to thank everyone who participated in this year's United Way Combined Giving Campaign. We raised a total \$12,942 which is \$4,283 more than what we raised last year.

This includes the funds from the bake sale and raffle. We also increase the number of participants for a total of

37% participation. Also thank you for supporting the bake sale and raffle. These two events raised \$508.

Tracy Williams
DNS Chief Operations Officer
2004 Combined Giving Campaign Coordinator

Raffle Winners-

**Cheese Cake -donated by Carol Kraco
Sandy Eads**

**Cheese Cake donated by Mary Ann Schulz
Richard Husar**

**Elliott's Restaurant (5 \$5.00 gift certificates)
Ronald Roberts**

Commissioner's Corner

Is the "Broken Window Theory" just a Theory?



by DNS Commissioner Martin G. Collins

Signs of disorder leads to acts of disorder. Does this mean that if we tow a junk car away that someone will not get mugged? It sounded absolutely absurd to me! Where is the cause and effect relationship? Show me the data!

That is what I used to say...until I saw the data. In promotion of the city's housing plan that says "target available resources", I started a project to get as many city and private agencies to focus on targeted geographical areas [the TIN (Targeted Investment Neighborhoods) areas] at the same time. It brought together DNS efforts on housing code enforcement, graffiti, litter and junk cars, DPW's street sweeping and parking enforcement to get junk cars off the streets, special pick up efforts, MFD's smoke detector placement program, targeted efforts by the MPD, and the efforts of community organizations in those areas to do clean up efforts. The areas targeted were where DCD had targeted its low interest and forgivable loan programs.

The result: Overall, crime has fallen and the assessed values have gone up faster than the city average. It has been a win for the community, for the MPD and for DNS.

No, towing a single car does not stop an individual mugger...but overall there is a definite correlation between our collective efforts to reduce the signs of disorder and crime rates. DNS benefits in turn as property owners are more likely to invest in buildings in neighborhoods with rising values and falling crime rates.

By collaborating with others who can reduce signs of disorder, we have made a real impact on our city. My thanks go out to all who have played a role in this project. The effort continues in what we all do every single work day. We at DNS get broken windows fixed. ☺

**Half day & Lunch w/ Commissioner Martin Collins
Jan Racer**

**Home Depot \$25.00 gift certificate
Stephenie Ruffin**

**Home Depot \$25.00 gift certificate
Sue Pucek**

**Mary Kay Travel Case
Sandy Eads**

**In-Door Parking Space
Chris Kraco**