

## Lee County orders Bonita trailer park cleanup

Manna Christian has week to improve the conditions

By MARY WOZNIAK

The owner and manager of Manna Christian RV Park on Wednesday were given seven days to respond to demands from two county departments to clean up widespread trash and rectify unsanitary conditions.

Peter T. Quinn, president of Manna Christian Missions Inc., which owns the park; and his brother, Thomas Quinn, who manages the park, were cited by Rick Roberts, county code enforcement director, with a nuisance violation for accumulated trash.

Large waste bins at the site are overflowing with debris from demolished trailers and other garbage strewn about the ground.

About 1,100 residents of Manna Christian and Saldivar mobile home parks were flooded out by rains from Tropical Storm Fay in August.

Manna Christian had 196 trailers, 166 of which were declared unlivable after the flood.

The residents are mostly Hispanics working low-income jobs who cannot find affordable housing anywhere else.

Now, about 150 families have moved back into the park, compared to about 250 before the flood.

The county health department served notice that the sanitation hazard created by wet household garbage lying about the community must be cleaned up, said Jennifer James-Mesloh, a regional spokeswoman for the health department.

The Quinns also were told that exposed sewer connections on abandoned trailers must be capped, she said.

"They did not have a lid on them, she said. "The reason that is a concern is that draws sewer flies and there is the potential for sewage coming out of that pipe."

She emphasized that there was no odor Wednesday and no sewage had spilled at the site.

Another concern was whether the destroyed trailers would harbor rodents, she said.

Roberts visited the park Wednesday, searching for violations, while a health department inspector arrived separately to tour the site.

"They don't need overflowing Dumpsters like this," Roberts said. "They need to empty them so they don't get so full."

Park residents were pleased that the county came to inspect and found violations.

"It's good. The cleaner, the better," said Angelita Guardiola, 75.

Aureliano Jose Ventura, 37, agrees.

"That way, they'll worry about cleaning up better," he said. He also said he wishes residents would pay more attention to cleaning up after themselves.

Roberts said his concern is that residents are bringing in new trailers to occupy vacant sites while demolition is going on and the residents are living amid the debris.

Manna Christian has seven days to comply with both the code violation and the health department notice, he said.

If they do not comply, the Lee County Hearing Examiner could call for a hearing, which could result in a lien on the property and fines, he said.

Peter T. Quinn declined to comment Wednesday.

"It's been a recurring problem here as this demolition goes on," Joan LaGuardia, spokeswoman of the Lee County Department of Community Development, said of the debris.

"Sometimes they get it all cleaned up," and then more time passes, code enforcement visits again and the debris accumulation has returned, she said.

Manna Christian has not paid its \$619.66 garbage bill to the county, but that isn't why the garbage hasn't been picked up, said Tammy Harrison, director for customer support at the county tax collector's office.

The county bill is for waste incineration, she said. The garbage pickup would be done by the company that owns the large trash bins at the park.

In this case, it is Waste Services of Florida Inc.

LaGuardia said the community development department was informed today by representatives of Manna Christian that the garbage bill has been paid and the bins can now be emptied.

However, Kurt Salac, regional vice president of waste services, said the Manna Christian account is not in arrears. If the account is for construction and demolition debris, the company will make a garbage pickup when the client calls and asks, he said.

People have the mistaken concept that the community development department has the ability to shut down Manna Christian, LaGuardia said.

That isn't true, she said. "We can't slap anyone in jail."

What is available is punishment to the occupants, which the county has been reluctant to do, she said.

Most of the residents own their own trailers, while others are owned by the Quinns and residents occupy them on a rent-to-own basis, she said.

The Quinns are slowly demolishing trailers made unlivable by the flood, but the process is slowed down even more when residents balk at giving up title to their old trailers so they can be demolished, she said.

So far, 67 of 166 unlivable trailers have been demolished.

"We wish they would do it faster, LaGuardia said. "We have been accepting of the pace, but not satisfied with the pace."

The demolition is taking a long time, said Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah, whose district includes Manna Christian.

"It's just an ongoing process. We are monitoring it and making sure that within a reasonable time frame, the work gets done," Judah said Wednesday.

## **Additional Facts**

### **WHAT'S NEXT**

Manna Christian Missions Inc. has seven days to comply with both the code violation and the health department notice, said Rick Roberts, county code enforcement director.

If it does not comply, the Lee County Hearing Examiner could call for a hearing.

45 more days would then pass until evidence is presented at the hearing and the owner has an opportunity to be heard, he said.

If found in violation, a lien would be placed on Manna Christian RV Park and the owners could be fined \$250 per day until the situation is corrected, Roberts said.