

Good morning,

My name is Major Josh Lewis of the Riviera Beach Police Department, a municipal police department located in Palm Beach County, Florida. I have been a law enforcement for almost 19 ½ years, all with the Riviera Beach Police Department. My professional training highlights include having attended the Southern Police Institute Command Officers Development Academy and the FBI National Academy. I also possess a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice, with a Major in Critical Incident Management.

The Riviera Beach Police Department initiated an investigation at the Stonybrook Apartment Complex, located at 1555 Martin Luther King Boulevard, Riviera Beach, Florida, in an effort to impact the various public safety, health, and quality of life issues at this apartment complex. Stonybrook, which was constructed in 1972, is an affordable residential development comprised of a mix of two and three bedroom, two bath housing units. There is a laundry/maintenance facility and a community center on the property. Fourteen buildings house 216 residential rental units. The property sits on 8.67 acres.

Between November 28, 2012 and March 20, 2013, city officials held a series of meeting with representatives of MiamiMar, the property management company for Stonybrook, and Armando Fana, the Regional Director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The topics of discussion were the prevalence of criminal activity and property maintenance issues at this property. Simultaneously, the property owner was notified of the existence of public nuisance conditions of the property; however, the property owner and their agent have resisted the attempts of City officials to compel them to implement strategies and improvements at their property and the public and other conditions continued to exist.

During this time, there were numerous drug warrants executed which resulted in numerous felony arrests. These arrests satisfied the legal standard to declare Stonybrook Apartments as a public nuisance. Property owners and HUD were notified of these findings. Research as early as 2012 revealed that GMF Stonybrook LLC, the property owner of Stonybrook, has a history of not maintaining the residential units in decent, safe and sanitary manners; more specifically, in Memphis, Tennessee, and Jacksonville, Florida, where it has lost its federal funding based on repeated code violations.

In March of 2013, Stonybrook received a Notice of Violation for accumulation of debris, loose garbage, landscaping, and overgrowth, along with an assortment of other miscellaneous code violations. In June, 2014, Stonybrook was declared to be a public nuisance pursuant to Chapter 11, Section 11-183 (1). The property owners stipulated to complete the following improvements which were designed to abate the ongoing criminal nuisances, to include securing access points of the property, to provide armed security, install security cameras, install a sliding access controlled gate, install landscaping, remove loose garbage, fix irrigation systems, paint exterior of the buildings, and add lighting.

In August of 2013, at a Code Enforcement Magistrate Hearing, the owner was found in violation of accumulation of debris, loose garbage, landscaping, and overgrowth, along with an assortment of other miscellaneous code violations. The Magistrate allowed the owner 120 days to comply or fines would

commence. The police department continued to monitor the property to ensure compliance with the Magistrate's order.

In May of 2014, a Nuisance Abatement Status Hearing took place; after presenting evidence, the Magistrate found that the nuisance had not been corrected. As a result, the City and property owners agreed to extend the Magistrate's jurisdiction over the property until December, 2014.

In November, 2014, a Notice of Hearing to impose Fines and Claim of Lien hearing was held. The Magistrate found that the property owner had not complied with the order and the violations of landscaping and loose garbage remained.

In December, 2014, a Nuisance Abatement Status hearing was held. At this hearing, the City provided evidence that Stonybrook was still not fully in compliance with the Nuisance Abatement Order, and that the landscaping and loose garbage violations were not corrected.

In January, 2015, Stonybrook fired their property management company. The police department continued to monitor this property to ensure compliance with the conditions of the Nuisance Abatement and Code Enforcement cases.

In October, 2015, a new case was heard before the Magistrate for continued public nuisance issues and again, the property was declared to be a public nuisance pursuant to Chapter 11, Section 11-183 (1). As such, the owners stipulated to improvements designed to abate the ongoing criminal nuisance, to include providing security services on site, perimeter integrity to secure the entire property (front gate), surveillance systems, parking decal and towing system, and removal and/or eviction procedures. These improvements were ordered to be completed within 45 days. The police department continued to monitor the property to ensure compliance with the Magistrate's order.

In May, 2016, a Nuisance Abatement Status Hearing took place. In this hearing, the Magistrate found the City provided sufficient evidence and testimony establishing Stonybrook as a recurring public nuisance. This was based in part through a series of drug sales which had taken place on the property.

In June, 2016, with Stonybrook management compliance, City Fire Department personnel completed a detailed fire safety inspection of Stonybrook Apartments. In this inspection, numerous violations were identified pertaining to smoke detectors, sounders, lighting, and other life safety issues.

In May, 2016, the City was contacted by Senator Rubio's office regarding an inquiry into violations at Stonybrook owner property for possible Department of Justice involvement. The City will continue to work hand and hand with HUD to address these matters, but diligent oversight and stringent monitoring will be paramount. The property owners have continuously failed to completely correct the Nuisance and Code issues present and show no inclination to do so.