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In Flurry of Filings, Five Drug Houses Targeted

City Attorney seeking board up orders in all five Columbus Police zones

COLUMBUS, OH—Based on community complaints that led to multiple undercover police investigations, Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. announced today that his office has filed civil motions requesting the board-up of five properties known for the purchase, sale, and use of illicit drugs across the city.

One of the properties, 2595 Hiawatha Street in the Linden area, also was cited for multiple code violations for being unfit for habitation due to having no running water, interior walls, kitchen, steps leading to the basement, or “appropriate sanitation facilities” (which presumably led to code enforcement officers finding a “bucket of feces” used by the occupants).

Two of the properties, 793 Byron Avenue on the east side and 2704 Woodcutter Avenue on the northeast side near Champions Golf Course, have been boarded up through an emergency restraining order and a preliminary injunction, respectively. City attorneys are seeking preliminary and permanent injunctive relief on the other three properties in hearings this week in the Franklin County Environmental Court.

If all properties are ultimately declared to be statutorily defined public nuisances, state law grants the court authority to order each of the premises shut down for up to one year.

“Filing five new cases in rapid succession, coming on the heels of a series of other successful injunctions, shows the seriousness of the drug epidemic,” said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. “We want to remind the public how important their tips are, especially in these instances, in helping us build strong cases based on hard evidence.”

On May 23, 2017 the Franklin County Environmental Court granted the city’s motion for a preliminary injunction to immediately board up [2704 Woodcutter Avenue](#), with a hearing for a permanent injunction to be held on July 27. Columbus narcotics detectives made covert purchases of crack-cocaine on January 30, February 13, and April 10 of this year. A search warrant executed on February 1 found heroin, marijuana, cash, digital scales, firearms and ammunition, in addition to crack-cocaine. Police sent a certified letter notifying the owner of the property, Sade Mohamud Ali, of the illegal activity occurring on the premises, which—if continued—would subject the property to nuisance abatement.

On May 31, 2017 the Franklin County Environmental Court granted the city’s emergency board up request through a temporary restraining order for [793 Byron Avenue](#). A hearing for a permanent injunction will be held on June 8, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. Columbus narcotics detectives made covert purchases of illicit drugs from the premises on November 7, 8 and 9, 2016. A

search warrant executed on November 9 found marijuana, cash, a handgun and 47.5 grams of crack-cocaine. The following day, police sent a certified letter notifying the owner of the property, Benjamin F. Bazemore, of the illegal activity occurring on the premises, which—if continued—would subject the property to nuisance abatement. The letter receipt was signed in early December but the illegal activity continued as police made additional covert purchases of narcotics at the premises on March 13 and May 22 of this year.

Since October 2015, Columbus police have been dispatched on numerous occasions to [3055 East Eighth Avenue](#) on the city's east side for complaints of drug dealing, burglary, stolen vehicles, intoxication and suspicious persons. Narcotics detectives made covert purchases of crack-cocaine at the premises on January 23, January 30, February 13 and February 14, 2017. Police sent a certified letter on February 20 notifying the owner of the property, Samuel L. Edwards, of the illegal activity occurring on the premises, which—if continued—would subject the property to nuisance abatement. The letter receipt was signed by Mr. Edwards, but the illegal activity continued as Whitehall police executed a search warrant on April 5, 2017 and found heroin, crack-cocaine, suboxone pills, several boxes of needles and syringes, cash, and 20 EBT (food stamp) cards from various owners. A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunction is being held today, June 5, 2017.

Columbus police have been investigating [2802 Rosedale Avenue](#) on the city's west side after community complaints of illegal drug activity and prostitution occurring at the premises. Narcotics detectives made covert purchases of heroin on July 25 and July 28, 2016. During a subsequent search warrant executed on July 28, police found 70 grams of heroin, 15 grams of crack-cocaine, marijuana, "various pills," digital scales, cash, two semi-automatic guns, gun magazines, live ammunition, and 12 individuals inside, including the owners of record Sonny and Daniel Whitaker. Sonny Whitaker was arrested on the scene for felony possession of drugs. He also received a certified letter from police but the illegal drug activity continued as narcotics detectives made a covert purchase of heroin at the premises on May 15, 2017. A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunction is being held on Wednesday June 7, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

Columbus police began investigating [2595 Hiawatha Street](#) in the Linden area during the summer of 2016 in response to community complaints about the premises operating as a "drug house." On September 19 and September 26, 2016 narcotics detectives made covert purchases of crack-cocaine. The owner of record, Edward Antauer, signed a certified letter from Columbus police on September 30, 2016. While Antauer insisted for months that the property was vacant, code enforcement officers found a plethora of evidence suggesting otherwise. Columbus police also received complaints of drug dealing occurring at the premises at "all hours of the day and night." During the execution of an administrative search warrant on May 23, 2017, code officers found drugs and evidence of occupancy in the form of "multiple beds" and a "bucket of feces," even though there appeared to be no real interior walls, kitchen, running water, or other accoutrements indicative of normal habitation. A hearing for preliminary and permanent injunction is being held on Friday June 9, 2017 at 11:00 a.m.

"These filings are the result of an unprecedented level of coordination between our office and the Columbus Police Division," said Assistant City Attorney Steve Dunbar. "These properties have a corrosive effect on our neighborhoods, and we must never forget the danger they pose to these neighborhoods and to the police officers who work to keep them safe."