

## Cleaning up Clark County, abandoned homes, buildings being taken down

Written by Janna Ross

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"It thrills me to death," stated Kenny Evans as he looked at the abandoned burned home in Otisco.

The property was beginning to be cleaned up last week but it was a long time coming for those living in the area. The home at the corner of Chestnut and Highway 3 in Otisco burnt about three years ago according to local residents. Since the fire the rubble has sat awaiting clean up.

This property is one of 20 properties across Clark County that will soon get a makeover thanks to the Clark County Commissioners.

"Mike (Moore) came to us and asked for support to clean up the properties," stated Clark County Council President David Abbott. "We (the council) voted 7-0 for the clean up. We have had so many complaints about vacant buildings and it is time to take action. We were getting complaints about the safety hazards the abandoned buildings represented. Now that it is beginning to be done, we are getting calls from people thanking us."

Moore was on hand Wednesday morning to see what progress had been made at the property in Otisco.

"This is just the first. Tony Semones has been around the county and found the homes and buildings that need to be cleaned up. There are about 20 homes in the area of Bethlehem, Otisco, Marysville," Moore explained. "This is a health hazard and a safety risk. It is long overdue and I'm glad we are getting something done."

Moore said the Commissioners have been working to find the property owner of the home in Otisco.

"It's a big deal now because it has gone on for so many years," Moore said.

According to Moore, the county will pay the clean up costs and bill the landowner. The landowners of the properties being cleaned up will be responsible for the costs of cleanup.

"We will first bill them," Abbott said. "Then if that doesn't work we will put a lien against the property. Then it can go down to a tax sale or a sheriff's sale."

Moore hopes that the other homes will be cleaned up by the end of the year.

"The plan is to have them cleaned up by the end of the year. That is if everything goes right. If they find asbestos that could slow down the progress. They didn't find any in this home," as he looked at what was left of the Otisco home.

The dumpsters were set in place late last week as county workers cleaned up the rubble.

"We will clean the site, grate it, level it and seed it," Moore added.

A couple neighbors of the area were also on hand to hear the news of the clean up effort.

Evans has been trying to get something done for two years.

"I am so excited that this is being done. It was just an eyesore and needed to be cleaned up. I thank Mike Moore and David Abbott for their efforts," Evans concluded.

Virgil Gibson, who lives across the street from the burned down home was also glad to see some progress.

"He was a good guy. He would do anything for you. My wife used to cook and take it over to him when he was over there by himself," Gibson stated of the former neighbor. "He really was a nice guy. He didn't bother anybody. All he did was bring in wood and stack it."

Gibson, who has lived on Chestnut since 1962, just smiled at the idea of the lot finally being cleared.

"It's a good day," Gibson concluded.

The price tag on the clean up for the home in Otisco is estimated at \$3,800, according to Abbott.

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The first home will be cleaned up on a court order. Then for the others in the county, a bidding process will take place.

The clean up is spawning from the August 2001 ordinance 82-001.

The other clean ups will come from the Enforcement Officer/Building Commissioner Tony Semones who has been busy traveling the rural parts of Clark County checking on the complaints the Planning and Zoning Commission has received.

“The ordinance has been in place but we never had the money to enforce it. Now we have the Commissioners and the Council agreeing to help clean up Clark County. Clark County is too beautiful of a place to clutter it like this,” Abbott explained.

If you know of a home that is a safety hazard please contact the Planning and Zoning Commission at 285-6287.

“The taxpayers in the area deserve to have it cleaned up. It’s a blackeye for Clark County. They have had to look out of their windows or drive by it everyday for three years and now it’s time to get the mess cleaned up,” Abbott explained.

He concluded, “I owe thanks to Mike Moore and Les Young. I am thankful this is finally happening. The taxpayers deserve it.”