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## Rental property certification questioned

*POSTED: January 21, 2009*

To The Editor I have sent the following letter to the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and thought I should share it with you. If you are a citizen of Lee

County, I would encourage you to contact the Board with your concerns. The letter follows:

Chairman Judah and Fellow Commissioners -

Recently there has been discussion of an ordinance regarding certifying the condition of rental property, specifically as it regards the Lehigh Acres Weed and Seed project.

As I currently understand this ordinance, an owner of rental property would be required to have the suitability of their improvement for occupation certified by the county, much as a business is required to obtain a certificate of occupancy and, in the original draft, the necessary inspections were to be completed by county staff.

I must question the effectiveness of such an ordinance. Certificates of occupancy are ostensibly required as a matter of public safety, yet to my knowledge the public has always been satisfied that rental properties are safe for occupancy, the

proof of which is the lack of demand for this ordinance since the inception of Lee County

more than 125 year ago.

This issue has arisen as a result of poor maintenance of numerous structures in the Lehigh Acres area. However, logic suggests that property owners who flaunt current property regulations without regard to the build-up of liens against their

property are highly unlikely to reverse course and properly maintain their property merely as a result of government authority.

This same government authority has already charged these property owners with code violations without result. Understanding that slovenly property owners will be slovenly regardless of government admonishment, we run the serious risk of burdening law-abiding citizens with useless fess. It is even worse that these fees would be levied during our current economic malaise.

As a citizen of Lehigh Acres, I am distressed by the problems our community faces.

My personal residence falls within the boundaries of the Weed and Seed program and I am involved with the Neighborhood Restoration subcommittee.

However, I do not believe that the heavy hand of government is the solution to this problem. The

federal government was a major culprit in the speculative construction boom, the crash of which led to our current neighborhood crises.

Taking a stick to these property owners, rather than providing a carrot, will not improve the situation.

I frankly believe that our area will only begin to

rehabilitate itself once each citizen takes ownership of the community. Attempting to avoid your neighbors' disappointment will do far more to encourage property maintenance than the strong arm of a face-less government.

The Neighborhood Restoration subcommittee is attempting to bring just such a change about. We are organizing each neighborhood in an effort to report code and safety violations and creating a clean-up program for local streets, roads, and

rights-of-way.

As this effort builds steam, I believe that the speed of positive progress will increase exponentially.

In conclusion, while it may feel that progress is being made through this ordinance, I adamantly believe that this proposal will not accomplish its intended goal, but rather, the unintended consequence will be to burden the law-abiding property owner at a time when they can least afford it.

Matt Caldwell

Lehigh Acres

If you would like to share your feelings about this issue with the members of the Lee County Commission, you can contact them using the following email addresses.

Chairman Ray Judah - [dist3@leegov.com](mailto:dist3@leegov.com)

Commissioner Bob Janes - [dist1@leegov.com](mailto:dist1@leegov.com)

Commissioner Brian Bigelow - [dist2@leegov.com](mailto:dist2@leegov.com)

Commissioner Tammy Hall - [dist4@leegov.com](mailto:dist4@leegov.com)

Commissioner Frank Mann - [dist5@leegov.com](mailto:dist5@leegov.com)

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