

November 7, 2017

Honorable Members of the Board and County Counsel,

I own many properties that require debris removal and I would like to participate in the County program. However, after reviewing the County Debris Removal application form, I am left with questions, and hopefully some constructive suggestions for you to consider.

In the application document, the statement on page 2 of 9..."after the residence is rebuilt....Owner shall not be liable for further costs to County" implies that if an Owner does not rebuild, they are liable for payments. With prevailing wage, said Owner could be liable for 3-10x more than the cost a private contractor would charge; potentially above and beyond insurance coverage. If the goal, as previously stated, is to have all properties cleaned up, ideally, the County should not penalize a property Owner for not rebuilding. Moreover, the Eligibility clause on page 5 of 9 states"Any property that is sold prior to issuance of cleanup certification will be withdrawn from the program and billed..." . These clauses potentially unreasonably penalize owners, who may have economic or medical reasons for needing to sell their properties. For example, I have many patients whom going back to their property is re-traumatizing, let alone being required to rebuild on it. Many of us are vulnerable and are signing consent to a process involving properties that we may never be able to return to and live on. Furthermore, many insurance companies make allowances for policy owners to rebuild elsewhere; why cannot the County?

If the 'no-rebuild penalty clause' is to remain in the contract, taking into consideration that other areas of the Contract have 'case by case' exceptions throughout its body, I respectfully request that you consider the possibility of creating the following exceptions: Create a non-punitive avenue for property Owners to transfer their property to another Owner at any time, as long as the new property owner rebuilds; with an 'Exemption' for neighboring property owners who want to increase green space and not rebuild. Create a penalty 'Exemption' process for property owners who have economic or medical reasons to not rebuild. Or....forego all of the above and simply state, "Any and all Owners do not have to rebuild and can sell their properties to whomever they want, whenever they want, as long as a transfer document, as applicable, relating to the debris removal program is signed by all interested parties.

Thank for your leadership in making this program available.

Respectfully,
Robert Gitlin
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