

## Six local motels get red tags after annual city inspections

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 11 February 2022 05:37

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The City of Gallup inspects local hotels and motels annually to ensure they are up to code and suitable for guests. During the Jan. 25 city council meeting, Gallup's Planning and Development Director Clyde Strain shared the 2021 findings.

He said six motels received red tags and were told they had to close their businesses due to code violations. The six were the Hacienda Motel, Blue Spruce, Arrowhead Lodge, Lariat Lodge, Zia Motel, and Redwood Lodge.

"What I can tell you is I've been doing these inspections for 20 years ... and progressively these

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particular motels have just gotten worse and worse and worse,” Strain said. “They haven’t gotten better over the years.”

The inspections took place between May and June. Code Enforcement worked with a building inspector and the Gallup Fire Department to perform assessments of the interior and exterior of each motel. Among the things they checked for were working smoke detectors and parking lot surfaces free of potholes.

It was determined that all six of the motels had violations that posed a threat to the public’s health, safety, and welfare. The problems ranged from structural issues to sanitation and insect and rodent infestation, broken fixtures and furniture, and lack of regular cleaning and maintenance.

According to Strain, the motels were informed of the violations during the inspections. Additionally, follow-up reports were hand-delivered along with attached pictures and information about how to fix the violations. A certified letter was also mailed to the motels and property owners.

Code Enforcement informed the motels that they were willing to do another walk-through to explain what could be done to fix the problems. However, they received no requests.

Each motel was also informed that they would need a contractor to file for a building permit when making repairs/upgrades to structural, mechanical, electrical, or plumbing work.

As of the Jan. 25 meeting, none of the motels had filed a building permit for repairs; therefore, all six motels have remained closed. The city learned that illegal construction was going on in one of the motels without a licensed contractor.

Strain noted that the owner of the Blue Spruce Motel has decided not to reopen.

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“The property owner talked to me and he said he had no interest in repairing the motel or reopening because of the clientele that were frequenting it,” Strain explained. “He said they were just destroying his business.”

There is currently wire fencing in front of all the rooms of the Blue Spruce Motel. Strain said people broke into the rooms and slept on the roofs.

Gallup Police Chief Franklin Boyd was at the meeting. He said Gallup Police have responded to many calls from the motels. Boyd said his department was putting a report of all the calls from the motels together.

Gallup’s Fire Marshal Jon Pairett also spoke at the meeting. He explained that the most common violations the fire department finds at the motels are inoperable smoke alarms and holes in the walls, floors, and ceilings. He said the fire department works with the motel owners a lot.

“One of the things that they’ve addressed with us is [that] they’ll fix a lot of the issues and then that week when they rent [rooms] out to some of the clientele it gets damaged again,” Pairett said.

Strain stressed that the city has already told the motel owners exactly what they need to do to bring their buildings up to code and that he really can’t be any clearer.

“We’re not going to design it for them, because that’s not our job,” Strain said. “What they were instructed to do is have a contractor go through their rooms and see what was needed to bring the rooms up to code.”

He noted that the owners might need to get an architect involved, depending on what the contractor finds.

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He told the council that one contractor reached out to him to ask if they could fix one room at a time and then open that room, so that the owners could bring in some income to pay for the expenses. However, Strain said that couldn't be done because the city doesn't want to issue 30 building permits for a single motel.

In response to a question from City Councilor Linda Garcia, Dist. 1, about whether the motel buildings were structurally sound, Strain said his team did not have the expertise to make such a determination.

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