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WSP woman guilty of trespassing

Alice Krengel convicted in jury trial

Seth Loy

news editor

Alice Krengel, a West St. Paul woman accused of running a flop house on Allen Avenue, has been convicted of breaking a no-trespassing order by the city.

Krengel, barred from her home at 823 Allen Ave. last August, could face 90 days in jail if she again breaks the law. She reportedly stepped onto the property Aug. 18 to feed her cats.

City Attorney Korine Land said the city is satisfied with the ruling against Krengel, who demanded a jury trial in the case.

"Obviously, the city would like to have seen some sort of punishment. That's why we take these to trial," Land said. "We can request up to a 90-day jail stay. Without any kind of financial income, some sort of jail sentence [would have been] extreme."

Krengel has stepped onto her property a "few times" since being barred a year ago, Land said. Some guests also were caught on the property, and two have pleaded guilty to trespassing.

In April 2000, a city building inspector found Krengel's 100-year-old home unfit for habitation, and her two children were taken from her by Dakota County Social Services. Krengel was ordered out of the home for a year, so that the property could be cleaned.

Cleaning professionals estimated that just sanitizing the house would cost \$19,124 and would take 14 working days "to the point that rehabilitation could begin."

An inspection of the home found numerous hazardous conditions, including decayed stairs and deteriorated furnace, heating and flue systems. Other problems cited were moldy, decaying walls and deteriorating floors throughout the house, insect infestation and rotting food and garbage.





Interactive Poll

What do you think of President Bush's plan to send 21,500 more troops to serve in Iraq?
Please select one:

- It's a difficult but necessary move. The Iraqis need help stabilizing their country.
- I don't support the President's plan; it will do nothing to stop the violence.
- Not sure. I just hope our Minnesota troops come home safe.
- United Nations peacekeeping troops may be a better solution.

Vote

View Results

Krengel, who is staying at the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul, said she is happy with the court's ruling. She plans to return home on Aug. 3 this year, when the city's no-trespassing order expires. She visited the property once last fall and found her phones and furnace not working and food spoiled in the refrigerator.

"It was in great condition when I left," she said. "God knows what condition it will be in when I return."

The only reason she visited her home Aug. 17 and broke the court order was to rescue her cat, she said, which had been staying at a friend's house but escaped and ran back to the only home it knew.

"It was a jury of six people that probably didn't understand what was going on, and that's why they found me guilty," Krengel said. "The judge asked me very thorough questions and said, 'I'm not going to fine you, I'm not going to sentence you, I'm not even going to send you to jail.'"

Although the property was partly cleaned five years ago, in 2003 the home was again deemed uninhabitable. When asked if the city has dealt with similar complaints of problem properties over the past year, Land said, "No, not even close."

"I think Alice's case is extreme," Land said. "It's safe to say this is an extreme property that needed an extreme remedy."

The city council had considered buying and demolishing the home, then selling the lot, but the option was too costly. Instead, officials are following the state's hazardous building law, allowing Krengel to retain ownership of her home as long as she cleans it.

The city has no current plans to buy the property, Land said.

"No, absolutely not. She owns it. We used the statute to give some relief to city resources - the police department from constantly answering phone calls [at the property], etc."

- *Seth Loy can be reached at 748-7815 or sloy@lillienews.com.*

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