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Homeless homeowner jailed

The Minneapolis-St. Paul Pioneer Press

November 02, 2006

“ She's affecting others and hurting herself.

After having exhausted the patience of relatives, friends, [West St. Paul](#) police and city officials, Alice Krengel is now starting to wear on a judge as well.

District Judge Rex D. Stacey on Thursday sentenced Krengel to 10 days in the [Dakota County](#) Jail when presented with evidence that Krengel violated the terms of her probation after two misdemeanor convictions for permitting a public nuisance.

Krengel pleaded guilty to permitting a public nuisance for incidents Nov. 14, 2004, and April 10, 2005. Both involved calls asking police to respond to heated arguments among unruly drunks in her home. City officials said many other similar incidents have taken place.

Krengel, 55, admits she is an alcoholic, and many people who know her suspect she has an undiagnosed mental illness.

City officials have gotten three court orders to remove Krengel from her home since 2000. The first two times the city argued that unsanitary conditions made the place uninhabitable. Most recently, city officials said her place had become a flophouse for drunks.

Police Sgt. John Hinderscheid testified that, in response to a June 29 complaint, he went to Krengel's home and found a bottle of vodka. Hinderscheid said Krengel appeared intoxicated and refused a breath test. Possession and consumption of alcohol violate the terms of her probation.

Krengel's case raises the thorny issue of how society should respond to a person who, besides being alcoholic, may also be mentally ill. She would be typical of many homeless people wandering the streets and staying in shelters, except for one fact: She owns her home in [West St. Paul](#), where she is considered public nuisance No. 1.

District Judge Leslie Metzen is expected to rule soon on the city's request to bar Krengel from her Allen Avenue home for one year. Krengel was evicted in August on a temporary court order.

The city took action after dozens of police visits to Krengel's home, many in response to complaints about fights, public drunkenness and loud arguments. Her home had become 'a revolving door' of shady tenants, one neighbor complained.

Nobody who knows Krengel thinks 10 days in jail will solve the problem.

At a brief hearing in which Krengel represented herself, City Attorney Kori Land started to ask the judge to order a chemical-dependency evaluation. But Stacey chose jail instead, saying Krengel's probation was over and he thought Krengel would just get in trouble again.

After the hearing, Land and Police Chief Manila 'Bud' Shaver said they think Krengel also needs a psychological evaluation. 'I think she needs some help,' Shaver said. 'She's affecting others and hurting herself.'

Land and Shaver said jailers can request social service workers to evaluate Krengel.

Krengel's daughter, Angela Hall, of Burnsville, and sister, Diane Krengel Reinhardt, of [Langdon, N.D.](#), suspect Krengel is mentally ill and they want authorities to order inpatient chemical dependency treatment and a mental-health evaluation.

Even if Metzen orders Krengel out of her home for a year, Land acknowledged the

remedy is a 'band-aid' solution. When Krengel returns to her home, Land said, drunks and other troublemakers will likely return. For now, though, Land said, 'Alice needs to fix Alice.'

Krengel, who appeared in court wearing shorts, a T-shirt and a sweater, reacted with shock to the sentence. She said she planned to appeal and asked for less jail time. Stacey replied: 'Just take it like a grown-up.'

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