



TOWN OF HILLSBOROUGH
California

News Release

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Flintstone House: Town requires all to follow permit rules to protect public safety, ensure good planning and fair process

The residence known as the “Flintstone House” continues to garner worldwide attention and emotional reactions that often miss the core problem – the property owner has constructed a large project without design review or first applying for required building permits. The Town of Hillsborough is committed to requiring that everyone follow the same long-established and fair planning and permit procedures. The Town’s goal is to balance individual taste with consistent community standards, as is true in most well managed communities.

When the project began in late 2017, the property owner was given a stop work notice and advised to come to Town Hall and apply for permits. Over a period of many months, the property owner continued to work on the project and received two more stop work notices. Eventually, the property owner was cited for multiple violations of the Hillsborough Municipal Code and ordered to remove the items that had been built illegally. The property owner continued to add elements without permits until finally the Town was forced to file a lawsuit in January 2019 to obtain compliance.

At a media event on April 11, 2019, the property owner and her lawyer made highly charged, vague accusations that Town staff was prejudiced against her. The Town categorically denies these allegations. At all times, the property owner has been treated with respect. Staff members have made many attempts to assist the owner and the design team in meeting planning requirements.

“The allegations of discrimination are baseless. The property owner has been treated with patience and respect by Town employees at every stage. The current legal action is the result of the property owner’s own unpermitted activities. Every Hillsborough resident would be treated in the same way,” said Assistant City Attorney Mark Hudak.

The property owner has submitted an after-the-fact application to legalize the project. The application is currently incomplete. Town staff will continue to work with the owner to determine if most of what they want to achieve can comply with design review requirements, including screening trees and other mitigation measures to soften the visual impact from this prominent site. If a compromise cannot be achieved, the court will have to decide whether the unpermitted installations including those cited for life safety concerns can remain.

“The Hillsborough residents we talk to believe the property owner should have gone through, and must follow, the permitting process everyone else follows. The property owner should not be given an advantage because they acted first and asked permission afterwards. The key issue is not the theme of the property, but one of precedent. If the Town does not enforce the municipal code for design and permitting requirements, it will be difficult to hold others accountable to the requirements in the future,” said City Manager, Ann Ritzma.

Due to the threat of litigation by the property owner, Town personnel will have no further public statements at this time. If or when an actual complaint is filed by the property owner, the Town will vigorously defend its employees and its planning and permitting process.

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