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Dangerous Fire Hazards in Brooktrails?

The Grand Jury received a complaint signed by seventeen residents of Brooktrails regarding their concern about cars parked on the roads. The complainants claimed that the parked vehicles would endanger their safety by interfering with fire emergency vehicles attempting to respond to a fire call.

The Grand Jury interviewed the main author of the complaint, the business manager, and a member of the Brooktrails board, a sheriff deputy of Mendocino County who lives in Brooktrails, a CHP officer who also lives in Brooktrails and the Fire Chief of Brooktrails. The Grand Jury also attended a public meeting for all residents of the district where the subject of cars that are illegally parked was on the agenda. The Grand Jury made a tour of Brooktrails roads to observe cars and other vehicles parked on roads and private property.

Findings

1. One board member and others in the community indicated Brooktrails is dangerously like the Oakland hills and that a similar fire would be equally devastating.
2. Building plans now require off-street parking before Brooktrails Architecture Committee approves the plans.
3. In observing the many parked cars and vehicles, The Grand Jury found that they may constitute a safety hazard and are in non-compliance with Brooktrails Township parking ordinance.
Mendocino County Codes Sec. §15.28.010 and Sec. §20.180.010
4. Brooktrails has a good fire abatement program.
5. None of the seventeen complainants took time to attend a Board meeting where the subject of their concern was on the agenda.
6. Uniform Fire Code Sec. §10.205 Obstruction states “The Required width of a fire apparatus access road shall not obstruct in any manner, including parking of vehicles. Minimum required widths and clearances established under this section shall be maintained at all times.”

Recommendation

1. If enough people want the vehicles cleared, they must participate in their political process by attending Board Meetings and pressure the Brooktrails Township Board of Directors to enforce the ordinances. One person or the Grand Jury cannot do this for them.
2. Congestion, caused by parking vehicles, which obstructs emergency vehicles, endangers all residents of Brooktrails. It appears that no responsible agency or body wants to tackle this critical issue. Our recommendation is that the Brooktrails Township Board of Directors takes a leadership role to meet with all other enforcement agencies to resolve this issue.

Conclusion

According to the professional judgment of the Fire Chief, Brooktrails manager, peace officers, and the majority of other political and safety officials, the parked and or abandoned cars, boats, and motor homes would not significantly interfere with fire fighting equipment and pose no danger to fire safety in Brooktrails.

Response Required

Board of Supervisors
Brooktrails Township Board of Directors
Brooktrails Fire Chief
Brooktrails Manager
County Sheriff

Response Requested

California Highway Patrol

CHAMBERLAIN CREEK AND PARLIN FORK CONSERVATION CAMPS

The Grand Jury is required by Penal Code Section §919 to oversee all prisons in Mendocino County.

Method of Investigation

The Grand Jury conducted a visit at both camps. The Grand Jury interviewed California Department of Corrections (CDC) and California Department of Forestry (CDF) Officers, on site instructors and several inmates.

Background

Chamberlain Creek and Parlin Forks are only two (2) of 38 conservation camps in California and are operated by both CDC and CDF and have a minimum of 212 inmates. Besides fighting fires, crews do volunteer work for flood control, forest and park maintenance, rescue work, and community service projects.

Getting assigned to a conservation camp is a hard-earned privilege for inmates. All inmates are screened carefully with emphasis on physical fitness and background for camp placement. After being selected, inmates are sent to a two-week training program in fitness, fire suppression and safety. The average sentence in a conservation camp is one year.

Each fire crew has 17 inmates, and is supervised by a CDF Captain and a CDC Officer. Each crew works a twelve-hour shift under some extreme conditions, often in steep areas and carrying 30 lbs. of equipment. Inmates earn \$1.00 per hour while on a fire.