

# ORANGE QUALITY OF LIFE TASK FORCE MAKES ARRESTS DURING SURPRISE NIGHTTIME INSPECTIONS OF BARS

**ORANGE** : While conducting surprise code enforcement, fire, health and police inspections of a number of the bars in the City, Mayor Hawkins' Quality of Life Task Force made three arrests for outstanding warrants.

At the Harmony Bar, 171 Central Avenue, Ricky Reddick of East Orange who was working security was placed under arrest for a warrant from the Essex County Sheriff's office.

At the Toast of the Town Liquor Store, 283 Scotland Road, Ryan Myricks of Orange and Raheem Greene of East Orange were placed under arrest for active warrants. Raheem Greene was wanted for burglary in Newark and Ryan Myricks was wanted for multiple warrants in Orange.

The arrests were made during an inspection of the Caribbean Club, Castaway Bar, Cherry's Lounge, Harmony Bar, Toast of the Town Liquor Store and Three Corner Deli.

The group conducting the investigations included Acting Police Director Captain Sooy and police personnel: Sergeant Dankins; Detectives Dickens, Brown and Tommer; plus Officers Cajiga and Carter of the SCAT Division. Other officials included Deputy Chief M. Mariano of the Fire Department, Curtiss Webb of the Planning Department and Vincent DeFilippo of the Health Department.

In addition to the arrests, the Task Force found:

- The Castaway Lounge, 284 Watchung Avenue, had several property maintenance issues including high weeds and deteriorated signage. Health concerns included kitchen area food storage, large pots and boxes of spices stored on the floor, food products in the hand sink and the basement needing a general cleaning. Cherry's Lounge, 145 Lincoln Avenue, had

debris at the rear of the building. The Fire Department found the basement stairs were dangerous, the electrical panel was not properly labeled and there was improper use of an extension cord for an air conditioning unit. The Harmony Bar, 171 Central Avenue, was cited for debris at the rear of the building. The bar area needed cleaning, repairs were needed for the floor, men's bathroom doors, and ceiling in the ladies bathroom. The back storage room area needed to be painted or tiled, the basement area cleaned and open containers of cat food removed.

- The Caribbean Club, 10 N. Center Street, had few violations. There was noticeable water on the floors of the lower level bathrooms. The main concern of the Fire Department was the number of people at the Club. Items included a missing occupancy sign and the fact that there was no one checking the number of patrons entering or exiting.

- The Quality of Life Task Force responded to a complaint at the Toast of the Town Liquor Store, 283 Scotland Road, of loitering in front of the store and drug activity at the bar in the store. In addition to the warrant arrests, the Fire Department found the illegal use of extension cords for illuminating neon signs, emergency lights not functioning, a conveyor belt in use on the basement stairs causing the stairs to be unsafe, exposed refrigerator units in use on the first floor and blockage in front of the basement entrance.

- Three Corner's Deli, 306

Washington Street, was cited for trash and debris in the rear, litter at the front of the building, missing sections of awning, and rubbish and debris in the basement. The Fire Department found an illegal conveyer belt on the stairs to the basement, poor and failing construction of the stairs, electrical panel not labeled for smoke detection system, exposed electrical wires (no covers on splice boxes), illegal extension cords to illuminate neon signs, and exposed wiring in plain sight and reach.

"This inspection is another part of our comprehensive approach to keep the residents of Orange safe," Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. said. "It is in addition to the new special Street Crimes Unit and the eight (8) new fully trained police officers we are hiring to lower overtime costs and fight back against violent crime. In addition to enforcing property maintenance and safety ordinances for our homeowners, landlords and commercial businesses, it is important to ensure that our bars and clubs are safe, free of criminals, and meet our codes."

"The Quality of Life Task Force has enabled the City to address problem properties, enforce our municipal codes and improve the quality of life for all residents," Valerie Jackson, Director Planning and Economic Development said. "The Mayor's leadership in this area has held homeowners, landlords and businesses accountable for adhering to our codes. I am extremely pleased about our progress to-date."

The Quality of Life Task Force began in August 2008 and regularly monitors chronic maintenance, sanitation, fire, and crime prevention targets throughout the city's neighborhoods. What makes the Task Force different from previous municipal clean-ups is three-fold: first, the program places a greater emphasis on improving the inter-departmental coordination of the entire code enforcement network, second, the team makes regular field visits to the problem locations, and third, the program uses a "case management" approach to develop a customized solution for each problem site. Most importantly, Mayor Hawkins plays an active role in the day-to-operation of the task force to oversee its implementation.

The Task Force is comprised of the City's Administration, Planning, Police, Fire, Public Works, Health, and Community Services departments. The group coordinates its efforts with the Law Department to improve ordinances and the Orange Municipal Court to strengthen prosecution.

Among the goals of the Quality of Life Task Force are to: augment citywide inspection coverage by improving the remediation rate for chronic violations; update code enforcement regulations; and address blighting influences throughout the city. Some of the specific activities have included: intensifying the Warrant Execution process; escalating the response to illegal dumping and graffiti; improving neighborhoods near current development sites; providing additional training for Code Enforcement inspection staff; clarifying responsibilities issues between Code Enforcement, Police and Public Works departments; and reviewing and amending existing ordinances to support code enforcement enhancement.