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Down and out in Coralville

Trailer park residents face July 1 deadline

By Tammara Meester
Iowa City Press-Citizen

CORALVILLE - Residents of Coral Trailer Park have been told to be out by July 1, despite the park owner's assurances last month that they would have at least six months notice to leave because the city is buying the property.

And in spite of the fact that Coralville city officials say they don't have to help residents of the park with expenses of relocating, state housing officials and private attorneys well versed in relocation law say the city has no choice.

Coralville is buying the trailer park, located in the 12th Avenue Urban Renewal District, for \$1.3 million. Owner Alan Saba, who also owns the Capri Motor Lodge, bought the property five years ago for \$1.1 million.

City Administrator Kelly Hayworth said the city is in no hurry to close on the deal and move residents off of the property. But Saba pushed for a quick sale, Hayworth said, because of the high cost of running the park, such as the \$3,000 Saba said he pays monthly for the water bill.

Saba said the July 1 closing was a mutual decision with the city.

The city plans to re-sell the property to a developer. Part of the purchase deal, said Coralville Assistant Attorney Kevin Olson, is that Saba remove the people and trailers from the property before the July 1 closing of the sale. Residents, both owners and renters, pay Saba a monthly \$225 lot rent. About 30 trailers occupy the 40-year-old park.

"I feel like I'm an animal," said Judy Johnson, 61, who has lived in the trailer park for nine years. "You don't treat people like that. These people are poor. You don't throw them out in the street."

As of late Wednesday afternoon, residents had yet to receive anything in writing from Saba about the pending eviction.



Matthew Lintz, 9, plays with a stick near a trailer demolished in mid-March next to his family's home in the Coral Trailer Park in Coralville. Owner Alan Saba sold the trailer park to the city of Coralville for \$1.3 million. Residents of the park must move by July 1.

Press-Citizen/Matthew Holst

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