

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man, 80, Falls Ill After Receiving Eviction Notice From Housing Authority For Feeding Stray Dog

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ST. CROIX -- An 80-year-old man, unable to handle stress resulting from a letter he received from the Virgin Islands Housing Authority informing him that he had 30 days to vacate his Wilford Pedro Homes (Whim Gardens) residence that he has resided in for the past 30 years, had fallen ill, prompting neighbors to take care of him.

The man, Ramon Delgado Fonseca, above, well-known among Whim Gardens community members, had resided at the facility without incident for 31 years. He was served the eviction notice on May 27 for feeding two stray dogs, one of which belonged to a Whim Gardens resident who had abandoned the animal.

In justifying the eviction, V.I.H.A. cited a section of its lease agreement that it says Mr. Fonseca violated. The [letter](#) says tenants are to "keep dogs, cats, or other common household animals on the premises only in accordance with V.I.H.A.'s pet policy," which requires pet owners to seek written consent and approval from V.I.H.A. Written in bold text was the clause that says violation of the pet policy may result in the termination of the tenant. Then, the letter says Mr. Fonseca specific violation was "feeding 2 feral or wild dogs that strayed onto the Wilford Pedro Homes public housing community grounds."

Mr. Fonseca has no family on St. Croix; he moved to the island from Puerto Rico in the 1950s and worked for years as an engineer before taking up residence at Whim



Wilford Pedro Homes (Whim Gardens)

The Consortium visited Mr. Fonseca on Wednesday afternoon to learn more about the situation. By then, V.I. Housing Authority officials, among the authority's chief operating officer, St. Croix district manager, director for asset management, and V.I. Housing manager, had called a meeting with Mr. Fonseca and two other residents who had received eviction notices, giving verbal and [written](#) apologies for the situation and stating that a letter of eviction should not have been issued.

Mr. Fonseca told The Consortium that the letter of eviction was written in English, although it was well known that he could hardly speak the language, far less read it. A day later, it was translated to Spanish, and the contents of the letter caused the elderly man, whose only family on St. Croix are his Whim Gardens neighbors, to fall ill, unable to get up from the only twin-sized bed in his small abode.

The assistant manager of the Whim Gardens facility, Eurina Joshua, said Mr. Fonseca was being evicted because he was feeding a stray dog that attacked V.I.H.A. staff and other residents. But Mr. Fonseca is not the owner of the dog, and did not invite the animal to the senior citizens' residents. The dog most likely gained access to the facility because as of Wednesday, the main entrance into Whim Gardens was wide open to anyone, as the security gate has been broken for over a year. Following yesterday's meeting, which took place at about 1:00 p.m., V.I.H.A. officials said they weren't aware of the broken gate, and would be sending someone to work on it from Thursday.

Concerned family members tried to explain the situation in hopes of settling on an amicable solution that would see those given eviction notices keeping their residence at

the facility. But the assistant manager, as well as Corrine Nugent, the community manager, would not budge. Ms. Nugent, as of Friday, supported the eviction, and told a family member of one of the residents who received the notice, to "do what you have to do," when informed that the matter would be brought to the attention of the media.

How V.I.H.A. allowed the matter to escalate this far is remarkable. Mr. Fonseca is frail and would immediately become homeless once evicted. He told The Consortium on Wednesday that one of the dogs would come to his residence uninvited, and he would sometimes attempt to shoo it away.

"I would close my door," he said, making hand motions that explained his desire to see the dog leave.

But even as Ms. Joshua and Ms. Nugent stood immovable by their eviction letter for dogs that those given the eviction notice did not own and had no control over, the facility itself continues to lack sufficient security for its residents.

The premises lack adequate lighting; there is no security for the elderly at nights; as already mentioned, the gate has been broken for over a year; there have been reports of male individuals walking nude at nights and unidentified persons peeping through windows.

As for the two dogs, V.I.H.A. failed to take care of the situation. Instead, they were given new homes by private citizens.

Ms. Nugent and Ms. Joshua apologized at the meeting to the residents, but it remains unknown whether any punitive actions were levied against them, by upper management, who disagreed with the decisions made by Ms. Joshua and Ms. Nugent, and said they weren't aware of many of the issues at Whim Gardens, including the broken gate.

All the affected residents were feeling much better since the matter was resolved, with Mr. Fonseca appearing jovial, laughing again and giving this reporter stories of his experiences at the facility on Wednesday.

"I am much better now. I could not get out [of] bed but now I happy," he said, a big smile overtaking his face.