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City Secures Emergency Board-Up of ‘Epicenter of Crime’

Troubled carryout scene of fraud, shootings, violent assaults, drug trafficking, rape

COLUMBUS, OH—A notorious carryout that has plagued Columbus’ South Linden neighborhood for years has been shut down this afternoon after City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. secured an *ex parte* temporary restraining order against a business called “a habitual resort for thieves, burglars,” and violent gang members in the Franklin County Environmental Court earlier today.

Longstanding problems at Mose’s One Stop Shop (1609 Cleveland Avenue), including crimes both perpetrated by and against employees and the co-owner/operator of the business, prompted the Columbus Police Division to begin investigating through the Linden Safe Streets program.

“The amount of illegal activity occurring at this establishment is alarming,” said Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr.

According to court documents, in April 2015 a victim reported that the co-owner/operator of Mose's, Mustafa Hamed, and another individual fired a gun at him and attacked him. That same month, another victim reported being choked and robbed in Mose’s parking lot.

In November 2015, a victim reported being shot in the leg and robbed in the parking lot. Also that month, Mr. Hamed reported that suspects “stashed counterfeit money inside Mose's [and] returned with guns drawn demanding their money.” Later in the month, a clerk reported that a local gang member and drug dealer, along with another individual, came into the store, displaying guns and threatening his life.

In December 2015, a relative and employee of Mr. Hamed reported that a customer pulled out a gun and threatened to kill him. Also that month, a victim reported being attacked, beaten and raped behind Mose's.

In January 2016, a clerk reported that a person came into the store, stole merchandise and assaulted him.

In September 2016, a victim reported being robbed and “sliced in the face” in the alley behind Mose's.

In February 2017, a juvenile victim reported being robbed at gunpoint and threatened at Mose's.

In March 2017, Ohio Lottery Commission investigators documented Mr. Hamed engaging in a scheme whereby he advised a purported lottery winner to put the winning ticket “in someone else's name to avoid paying any taxes or child support owed to the government.” Hamed offered to purchase the winning ticket for half the payout and then attempted to claim the winnings for himself, informing lottery officials that “he did not own or work at Mose's.”

In May 2017, three gang members were arrested at Mose's for gun-related offenses. Also that month, police officers stopped a woman holding a foil packet with an unknown white powdery substance that read "White Angel Stain Remover, Not for Human Consumption" outside of Mose's. She told the officers that she purchased the bag for \$20 from the cashier at Mose's, and that she "regularly comes to Mose's to purchase the substance to smoke it."

Also in May, approximately thirteen gang members and associates filmed a music video inside and directly outside of Mose's. The group flashed gang signs, engaged in hand-to-hand narcotics transactions, and displayed money and guns in plain view of the store clerks and patrons, including small children. The clerks did not ask the group to leave, nor did they call the police. Columbus police intervened when officers witnessed one of the gang members standing in front of the store waving a gun. Police searched a vehicle while there and found 133 grams of heroin, a "50 round drum" for a Glock handgun, 36 live rounds and 11 spent shell casings. According to court documents, one of the gang members admitted that "the store clerk was paid \$1,000 by the group to shoot the video at Mose's."

In June 2017, a victim reported being knocked to the ground behind the store, then punched and kicked in the face, head and torso by four unknown suspects. Also that month, while state agents removed lottery machines and tickets from the premises due to the revocation of the owner's lottery license, Columbus Vice detectives discovered over \$16,000 in cash, two handguns, several magazines with live rounds, and multiple bottles of Cialis and Viagra inside a cooler in the store. Mr. Hamed was present during the search and admitted to detectives that he "buys [Cialis and Viagra] pills from people and sells them" at his store but claimed he didn't know who owned the guns.

Along with several more documented incidents of gang activity and drug dealing at the premises, detectives obtained direct evidence of several illegal underage purchases of alcohol, including a minor purchasing alcohol from another minor working in the store, Mr. Hamed's 16-year-old son.

"The amount of evidence supporting the immediate board-up of this establishment is overwhelming," said Assistant City Attorney Katarina Karac. "The breadth and scope of illegal activity occurring at the premises clearly made it a danger to patrons, employees, nearby residents, and the police officers who regularly responded to calls at the store."

A follow-up hearing for a preliminary and permanent injunction against the owners of Mose's One Stop Shop is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on August 14, 2017.

If the property is ultimately declared to be a statutorily defined public nuisance, state law grants the court authority to order the premises shut down for up to one year. The owners also would be permanently enjoined from "conducting, maintaining, using, occupying, or in any way permitting" a public nuisance anywhere else in Franklin County, Ohio.

In order to secure closure of the business, Karac, who is the Zone Initiative Attorney assigned to the Linden area of Columbus, is seeking to prove that the owners are guilty of maintaining a nuisance by establishing that they, as owners of the premises, "knew of, participated in, or acquiesced to the activity which constituted the nuisance" as prescribed by [Chapter 3767](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

Copies of the city's [complaint](#) and the [court's order](#) are available online.