

## Resident upset by code enforcement officer activities

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

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(Letter submitted to Holyoke City Council and for publication in The Holyoke Enterprise.)

I have never felt the need or the desire to write to you before, but feel now is the right time. For those of you who don't know me, my name is "Moe" Smith and I work for a large farming cooperation in Phillips County, and we farm in Colorado and Nebraska.

Now on to my concern! I was issued a citation on May 12 for dandelions and grass being too tall. I was not home when the code officer hand-delivered my citation, but my wife said the code officer rang the doorbell and tried the door before my wife answered it. If you're not home, do they just come in?

According to the citation, I had five days or was threatened with court. This being an agricultural community, when the weather is right you farm; when the weather is wrong you might possibly have time off, but if it's too wet to farm, it is probably too wet to mow. Also, with the way the wind has been blowing around the country, it is impossible to spray dandelions unless you'd like to upset your neighbors.

My family moved to Holyoke in 1952 and nobody had to tell us, until recently, when to mow or take care of the weed problems. Speaking with my mother, she said it was a beautiful town in 1952, and that hasn't changed now. It is still a beautiful town because of the people who live here and own property, not because of a code officer who feels the need to tell us what we already know and what will be taken care of as job, weather and time permits.

I'm not home much during the day, but my wife says the code officer drives by our block at least 10 times per day. To me this seems like stalking and harassment. Let alone the gas consumption it takes to accomplish this. As we understand, our block is not the only one the code officer stalks and harasses.

Most of the code officer's concerns were handled this weekend on my property—not because of the citation or threat of court, but because planting was over at work, the weather was perfect and time was on my side. I also had enough time to drive around town to look and visit and what I saw was a lot of dandelions, which would tell me almost everyone in town would be getting a citation. But in talking with several citizens, they already knew their problems existed and were trying to take care of the problem—again, without being told what to do.

Also with my visits, people shared with me that their concerns were the same as mine about the need for a code officer, in which I don't feel can be justified. I feel with no bigger than the problem is in our town, the police could make note of the property of concern on their regular patrols and a letter could be sent or a phone call be made.

I do realize there will always be a few who maybe don't care about their properties, or for whatever reason can't seem to keep up with what we think is unsightly. But as for the other citizens, I will let them handle their concerns as they see fit. But I will say this problem is only going to get bigger until something is done.

In closing, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and a special thanks to the two councilmen who I visited with on the evening of the 12th. I didn't get the satisfaction I wanted, but they did listen to my concerns.

Respectfully yours,  
Marlin "Moe" Smith