

Jones

From Page A1

payments. He says he hasn't been given a payment book or been told whom to pay. As for complaints about the condition of the houses, most, said Jones, are complaints that any homeowner would experience, even if he lived in a new house.

"I provided housing for 11 people," said Jones. "I set an image ... then I take this kind of slap in the face. It's set me up as a crook. It's messed up my business. What I've done, I feel, is positive.

"Look what I've done to improve that community. You could move in a brand new house and have this stuff."

After purchasing the 11 houses, Jones proposed in early 1984 that the city's Community Development office obtain a loan to help repair the houses, many of them designated for demolition. Jones also requested approval from the city's Housing Authority to have the rents subsidized. Both measures were approved, and Jones started renovations in June, 1984.

The city's \$171,000 loan came from \$133,000 in federal jobs bill money and \$38,000 from Community Development Department contingency funds. Jones was given 15 years to repay the loan at 10 percent interest.

Unexpected Delays

Jones' contractor estimated 120 days to complete the project. But because of delays -- underestimation of the amount of work each house needed and restrictions the city placed on the loan requiring Jones to hire 11 unemployed people to help with the renovations -- Jones said he had to request extensions.

The last house was completed in April 1985. Jones began collecting money from the Housing Authority in May. Before any tenants moved into the houses,

the city's inspection department inspected them. Then Jones and each tenant reinspected each house for any faults, and Jones asked the tenant to sign an agreement listing any defects in detail.

Several weeks ago, Jones said he was told the houses were being reinspected because of complaints. Inspectors found a variety of problems, including loose door casings and door latches, defective electrical outlets, unconnected stove hoods, loose paneling, odors coming through heat ducts and leaking shower heads.

"That's the inspector's fault," said Jones. "All he had to do was say something was wrong with a unit and it would have been fixed."

Only a few of those problems -- loose door latches and porch railings -- existed on Tuesday afternoon during the tour.

One tenant, Rosean Green, said her complaints had been solved Tuesday morning, only hours before the tour started.

"This is a decent place to live," said Green, who pays \$315 per month for rent. "But the construction work is poor. This house is not worth \$315."

Reginald Hoskins, Mrs. Green's brother, said he remembers the area before Jones renovated the houses and thinks Jones did a good job.

"I saw them before they were done," said Hoskins. "I feel he did a good job. He got a few more things he needs to do. Overall, I give him a B plus or an A minus."

Routine Complaints

John Roberts, Housing Conservation Administrator, said the complaints are "minor things."

"Those houses are very nice houses," said Roberts. "The houses are up to standard."

Jones' houses, said Roberts,

were listed on the city's standard housing inspection list before Jones purchased them. Roberts characterized the houses then as "deteriorated," but capable of repair. In fact, said Roberts, stove hoods are not a requirement for a house as far as the city's inspection code is concerned.

Jones also classified the complaints as "nitpicky" and said he isn't sure why the houses were reinspected.

"I went to all the tenants and asked if they had called about any complaints," said Jones, adding that he has received no complaints at his office about any repair problems. "I can't see how the houses could pass inspection one time and 90 days later be declared not fit."

Alderman Virginia Newell said she thinks the city is "98 percent at fault" in the Jones situation.

"I have problems with CD (Community Development) and the inspections division," said Newell. "They (inspectors) do not equally do the inspections for the city across the board. The mess they let stay over here in our wards, they wouldn't consider it for their wards. They have a different inspection code for our part of the city. They should have the same code all over."

Newell added, "CD and inspections leave a lot to be desired. I'm glad they are dismantling the CD department. A lot of things they did were very bad and we are suffering from it now and this is an example of it."

Whenever a problem or complaint arises, a tenant can call Jones or the Housing Authority. Tompkins said the Housing Authority didn't receive any complaints from the 11 tenants. Instead, said Tompkins, the tenants called their aldermen directly. Burke is the alderman of the ward where the houses are located.

Burke said she called the city

inspection department because she didn't think Jones was listening to the complaints and because the tenants deserve a decent place to live.

"Poor people have the right to live in decent housing," said Burke.

Burke admitted that Jones did an "OK" job in renovations but felt that the tenants' routine maintenance problems were not being solved.

As for the late payments, Jones said his loan contract states that "no interest shall accrue during the Rehabilitation Period." Because the houses were still being rehabilitated just before April and the first month's rents were not collected until May, Jones said he understood that the payment period started in May. But after repeated attempts, Jones said he has not been told where to make payments or whom to pay.

Misunderstanding Causes Confusion

Assistant City Manager Berrier said there may be a misunderstanding between Jones and the city about when the payments were to start. Although Jones was granted the extensions, a payment schedule was set before he received the loan.

"We're making a proposal to modify the terms of the contract so he won't be eight months behind," said Berrier. "This is a question the Board of Aldermen will decide."

If the project had been completed on time, payments would

have started on Nov. 1, 1984. But because of delays and extensions, Jones thought payments would start when the work was completed. Jones said he was granted his first extension in late October. At that time, Jones said Berrier told him that as long as he was progressing, he didn't have any problems with granting the extension.

Jones said he didn't get the last of the city's loan payments until mid-April.

The Board of Aldermen learn-

ed of the Jones situation at a Finance Committee meeting in June. Then, the members of the Finance Committee, headed by Newell, were alarmed and refused to approve the revised payment schedule until further study of the Jones situation.

Jones said he has been made to feel that he is responsible for communications problems between the city staff and aldermen.

"It is not my fault that the city Please see page A13

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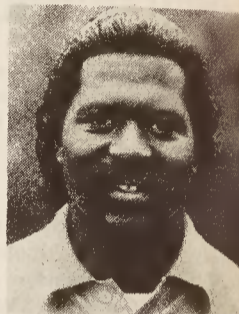
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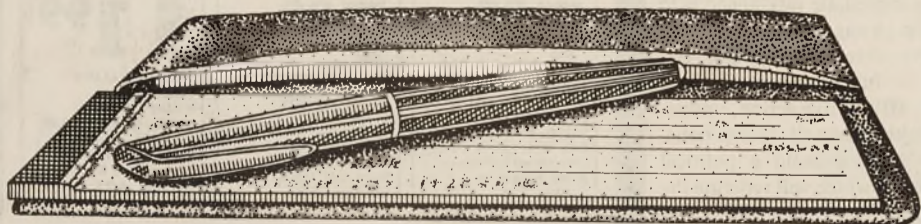
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