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## Federal judge holds St. Bernard Parish in contempt

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By **Benjamin Alexander-Bloch, The Times-Picayune**

Ten days after **ordering St. Bernard Parish to provide electricity** to four controversial apartments under construction in St. Bernard, a federal judge on Thursday held St. Bernard in contempt of court for not complying with her order.



U.S. District Judge Ginger Berrigan

U.S. District Judge Ginger Berrigan stated that St. Bernard has until 3 p.m. today to provide electricity to all the sites. St. Bernard officials have refused to authorize electrical services because they claim the developer, Provident Realty Advisors, does not have valid building permits.

Berrigan also ordered the parish to issue permits for the sites by 3 p.m. today and said she'd fine the parish \$10,000 a day until it complies.

On June 20, Berrigan cited recent **racist graffiti** on the Provident Realty Advisors sites and stated that electricity is needed for security offices that could prevent further vandalism. Local residents and officials have **fought tooth-and-nail** since 2008 against the mixed-income multi-family developments, fearing they would lower property values in the area.

Berrigan had asked Anthony Lamanna, who runs Lamanna Engineering Consultants in New Orleans, to issue a report after reviewing St. Bernard government's concerns about construction.

Lamanna did not cite any major issues with construction that should lead to a lack of permitting, besides one question as to whether a sidewalk along Patricia Street on one of the sites is a state or parish road. Berrigan ruled no work can continue on that sidewalk until that matter is determined, but that construction can continue on the rest of that site.

The judge also has asked the parish to submit a plan for how future building inspections will be conducted. Provident and the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center will be allowed to respond to that plan before Berrigan rules.

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