



Paradise Police Department

5595 Black Olive Dr. Paradise, CA 95969 530.872.6241

www.townofparadise.com/police



STATE OF CALIFORNIA PROPOSES HOUSING SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SEXUALLY VIOLENT PREDATOR IN PARADISE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 8, 2023

Butte County and Paradise Police Department officials today announced they were officially notified just days ago that the California Department of State Hospitals has proposed housing a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) from Santa Cruz County at a private residence in the Town of Paradise for outpatient treatment.

This is the second time in less than three years that the state hospital through its contracted vendor Liberty Healthcare Corporation has proposed placing this SVP from Santa Cruz County in Butte County on supervised release.

Michael Cheek, now 71, was convicted of kidnapping, rape and forcible oral copulation in 1980. He abducted a 21-year-old female victim from Seabright State Beach in Santa Cruz. He drove her to a remote location, where he raped her at gunpoint. Cheek was sentenced to 20 years in prison but escaped custody and committed another rape in 1981 while on escape status, this time in Lake County. In that case, Cheek abducted a 15-year-old female victim, again at gunpoint, and raped her. Cheek was convicted of rape and furnishing a controlled substance to a minor, and he was sentenced to an additional 11 years and 4 months.

When Cheek was scheduled to be released in 1997, the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office successfully petitioned to have him declared as a sexually violent predator under the Sexually Violent Predators Act, and he was committed to the Department of State Hospitals for treatment.

On October 7, 2019, state hospital doctors declared Cheek could be managed outside of the locked state hospital wards and supervised as an outpatient in the free community. A Santa Cruz County Superior Court judge agreed and ordered Cheek conditionally released into the community under the supervision of the state hospital's SVP supervision contractor - Liberty Healthcare Corporation (Liberty). The Santa Cruz court further ordered Liberty to find an appropriate residence in Santa Cruz County, his county of domicile, to house Cheek.

On April 21, 2020, based on Liberty's representations they could not find housing for Cheek within Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County judge found "extraordinary circumstances" existed under the Welfare and Institutions Code and authorized relocating Cheek to a different county.

On August 6, 2020, Liberty proposed ordering Cheek to live at Cheek's sister's residence in Butte County's rural Berry Creek community. Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey and Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea strongly objected to that proposed placement noting it was too close to the Berry Creek school, which was statutorily prohibited under the law. Prior to an official determination in the matter, the sister withdrew her consent to have Cheek placed in her home, and the address was pulled from consideration. Ramsey noted the sister's home, and the Berry Creek School were both destroyed later that year in the Bear Fire and the sister has moved from the county.

In July of 2021, Liberty purportedly found a residence back in Santa Cruz for Cheek to live at. The affected neighborhood and community were notified. In November of 2021, the Santa Cruz County Superior Court

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was notified that a private school had opened near the proposed address in August of 2021. As the school came into existence after the order for placement, a Santa Cruz Superior Court judge ordered the placement to still take place. The decision was appealed, and in January of 2023, the Sixth District Court of Appeal in San Jose ruled that Cheek could not be placed at the location due to the school's existence.

On January 10, 2023, Liberty proposed ordering Cheek to live at a newly rebuilt empty residence in Paradise. No Butte County agency was notified about this hearing, and a Santa Cruz Superior Court judge placed a gag order on officials there barring them from disclosing the address of the proposed placement until an official public notice under Welfare and Institutions Code §6609.1 had taken place. That notice was received by Paradise Police Department and the Butte County District Attorney's Office on February 2, 2023.

On February 7, 2023, the Butte County District Attorney's Office filed an objection with the Santa Cruz Superior Court that statutorily mandated notice requirements to Butte County were violated. The Santa Cruz County judge rejected the DA's objection and declared that a placement hearing would proceed in Santa Cruz Superior Court to determine if the Paradise home was suitable under the law.

DA Mike Ramsey said that hearing date is scheduled for March and objections to the location must be finalized locally **by February 24, 2023**. DA Ramsey said objections can be based upon facts such as the home being located too close to public or private schools, parks, places where children congregate or places where victims of the type previously attacked by Cheek can be found.

Ramsey noted that the Paradise Memorial Trailway, a popular long biking and hiking trail, passes close by the Gate Lane residence.

Chief Reinbold along with Town officials are in strong opposition to the proposed action by Liberty Healthcare Corporation. Chief Reinbold has directed his officers to undertake a thorough investigation into the proposed Gate Lane location and its surroundings. DA Mike Ramsey has also assigned prosecutors and investigators from his office to assist in assembling facts to oppose the placement of a sexually violent predator in the community of Paradise.

Officers from the Paradise Police Department, along with other agencies, will be going door-to-door, beginning immediately, in the immediate vicinity of where the proposed residence will be. They will attempt to contact as many residents within the community as possible to gather key demographics and vital information to oppose the relocation of the sexually violent predator.

Members of the community are urged to share any insights they may have as to why housing a Sexually Violent Predator at 1550 Gate Lane in Paradise is unsafe.

A town hall meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday, February 16, 2023, from 6:30 – 9:00p.m., at Paradise Alliance Church located at 6491 Clark Road. Additional information will be provided at the town hall, and time for public questions will be allotted. This town hall will be live streamed on the Paradise Police Department's [YouTube Channel](#).

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The Paradise Police Department has also created a questionnaire to assist members of the community in voicing their concerns. The link for the questionnaire is [HERE](#) (Ctrl+Click), and it can also be accessed using the following QR Code:



Handwritten letters may also be submitted to the Paradise Police Department at the following address:

Paradise Police Department
Attn: Chief of Police, Eric Reinbold
5595 Black Olive Drive,
Paradise, CA 95969



Michael Cheek, 71 years old

Any media inquiries can be made by emailing val@blueflamingomarketing.com

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