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## Landmark watering hole Jimbo's faces uncertain future

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The future of Jimbo's famously ramshackle beer and smoked-fish shack on Virginia Key was cast into doubt Tuesday after city of Miami officials ordered its power cut off, citing a trailer fire they blamed on a jury-rigged -- and illegal -- electrical system.

No one was seriously injured in the Sunday evening fire, which consumed a camper trailer belonging to owner James ``Jimbo" Luznar's son, James ``Bubba" Luznar Jr.

But the blaze came in the midst of a city code-enforcement crackdown on the long-unpoliced, publicly-owned site, underscoring inspectors' conclusions that much of it represents a health and safety hazard.

Bubba Luznar, his face seared from the heat of the fire and coughing continually because of smoke inhalation, said he doubted Jimbo's could stay open beyond Wednesday without electricity. It's unclear when -- or even whether -- it would reopen, he said.

Without power to run the fish freezers, beer fridges and ice-makers, he said, Jimbo's would go out of business.

``They're on the warpath," Luznar said of city officials. ``It looks like it's really dire."

An electrical contractor told him he could reconnect power according to code, Luznar said, but ``I don't know if they're going to allow it."

City financial officer Larry Spring, filling in for vacationing City Manager Pete Hernandez, said no long-term decisions had been made about Jimbo's future beyond cutting off the power to avert further fire hazards.

``I am working with the building department and code enforcement to see what our next steps should be," Spring said. ``The most immediate thing right now was addressing the life and safety issues."

### POOR WIRING

After the fire, city inspectors found a network of extension cords crisscrossing the site to provide power to camping trailers that house several people, including Luznar and his girlfriend.

The extension cords snake out from the main fish shack, which gets its electricity from a nearby power pole, Bubba Luznar said. He acknowledged the connection was not up to code.

City Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes Virginia Key, said the fire proves the need to clean up Jimbo's and ensure it meets regulations.

“You've seen what happens when you don't have compliance,” Sarnoff said. “The city is going to require them to have proper safety measures and proper power sourcing.”

The city has said it does not want to push out Jimbo Luznar, who has operated the fish shack on public park property since the 1960s without a lease or legal agreement, apparently under an informal deal reached with city leaders back then. Jimbo's sells smoked fish, beer and soft drinks out of the jerry-built shack.

For decades, Jimbo's apparently has evaded code and food-safety inspections required of any other businesses in the city, Sarnoff said.

“The city's position is, if they're serving food they need to follow regulations and have permits, which I understand they do not have,” he said, adding: “I don't know how they've been able to avoid that inspection for 20 years or however long it's been.”

Whether Jimbo's can be brought into compliance is unclear.

## **DETERIORATION**

In recent years, conditions at Jimbo's -- which gained fame and popularity as a rustic, old-Florida watering hole -- have deteriorated as its aging owner began spending less time on site.

Last month, code officers ordered the removal of several camper vans, including Bubba Luznar's, as well as numerous abandoned vehicles and boat hulls that litter the site on the edge of a mangrove lagoon. People living there were doing so illegally, inspectors said. The city also ordered the Luznars to remove piles of accumulated trash.

Much of the trash has been removed, but the campers and vehicles, as well as some sagging old film-set shacks that were supposed to be demolished, remained on the site Tuesday. City officials said the Luznars had not complied with the order.