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**Blighted Property Review Committee**  
**Thursday, April 4, 2024**  
**Hybrid Meeting**  
**Determination Hearing**  
**Meeting Report**

Mr. Eyrich called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:04 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

**BPRC Attendance:** T. McMahon, N. Eyrich, P. Rye, A. Boyd, J. Keith – in person and J. Baez, Jr. for C. Miller – virtually

**Staff Attendance:** H. Scheuring, M. Mayfield, Esq and L. Kelleher – in person

Mr. Eyrich announced the purpose of the hearing and the Blighted Property process.

**Mr. Keith moved, seconded by Mr. Boyd, to approve the minutes from the January Certification Hearing as distributed and the agenda for this meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**PROPERTIES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE PROCESS**

Ms. Scheuring stated that the following two properties no longer meet the blighted property criteria and can be removed:

- 50 Neversink St.
- 1417 Monroe St.

**Mr. Keith moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to remove the properties listed above from the process.**

**Determination Hearing**

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Scheuring. Ms. Mayfield stated that Ms. Scheuring will remain under oath until the hearing adjourns.

**1. 225 Cedar St. Albert Martorell, owner, 223 ½ Cedar St., Reading PA 19601, Purchased Nov 2013**

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mr. Martorell. A copy of the packet was provided to him prior to the start of the hearing.

Ms. Scheuring entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet and she entered the property packet into the record as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on March 5, 2024
- Delinquent water charges \$14,010.67, Water off 2006
- Delinquent taxes \$2262.08 2023-24 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Property Maintenance – 2 NoV, Failed Inspection 9-13-12, 5 QoL Trash, 5 QoL Weeds, & 7 QoL Motor vehicle nuisance, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, \$8745 unpaid fees

*Note: delinquent Water includes sewer, trash, and recycling*

In response to a question from Mr. Eyrich, Mr. Martorell stated that after purchasing the property he began to make repairs but he got injured which interrupted the process and now he wants to sell the property. He stated that he didn't cooperate with the inspection requests because he wants the rehab completed prior to an inspection.

Ms. Mayfield noted that if the process moves forward, the certification will be recorded on the deed, making potential buyers aware of the property's condition.

Mr. Martorell questioned what needs to occur to stop the process from moving forward. Ms. Scheuring explained in detail the actions Mr. Martorell needs to take, which includes submitting a rehab plan and allowing inspections.

Mr. Martorell inquired about clearing the water delinquency and he was advised to contact RAWA and the County Tax Claim office about the tax delinquency.

Mr. Martorell inquired about how to deal with the trash that gets dumped in the yard. Ms. Scheuring explained that it is the property owner's responsibility to clear the property of trash, noting that calling when the trash is removed will help avoid the QoL issuance.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye, Mr. Martorell stated that the property required improvements when he purchased it and his injury stalled his ability to continue to make the improvements. He added that the health issues his father experienced also caused delays. He stated that he is in the process of selling the property to a friend.

Ms. Mayfield suggested using a title company to sell the property which will clear the water and tax delinquencies.

Mr. Martorell again questioned how to avoid this process.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Martorell can discuss that issue with Ms. Scheuring after the hearing.

Mr. Eyrich stressed the need for Mr. Martorell to allow Property Maintenance to inspect the property, as the inspection will provide detail on what needs to be done.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Baez moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to determine this property as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Mr. Eyrich and Mr. Rye noted that the committee does not want to demolish properties and that they prefer seeing property owners take responsibility and make the required repairs, including allowing Property Maintenance inspections.

### **20. 831 Schuylkill Ave., Stephanie Rodriguez-Antigua, owner, 831 Schuylkill Ave Reading PA, Purchased March 2023**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Stephanie Rodriguez-Antigua. A copy of the property packet was provided to the property owner prior to the hearing.

Ms. Scheuring entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows and she entered the property packet into the record:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on March 5, 2024
- Delinquent water charges \$79.07; Water off since 2018
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 4 NoV, 4 Work Orders, \$10,489.55 total unpaid, Failed inspection 6-21-18, 3 QoL Trash, 3 QoL Weeds

*Note: delinquent Water includes sewer, trash, and recycling*

Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua stated that she purchased the property last year and that there was fire damage in the kitchen. She stated that she is working to repair the property.

Ms. Mayfield inquired about the accuracy of the mailing address listed by the County Assessment Office. Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua stated that the mailing address is correct and that she checks the mail daily, as she currently resides with her father at 829 Schuylkill Ave. She

stated that the property is vacant and that she plans to reside at the property after it is rehabbed.

In response to a question from Mr. Eyrich, Ms. Scheuring explained that currently inspection scheduling is delayed due to the change in software programs.

In response to a question about the large amount due to Property Maintenance, Ms. Scheuring stated that the amount was charged to a former property owner and that Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua is only responsible for the fines charged after the title changed to Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua but the fees for Work Orders follow with the property.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye, Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua stated that she recently replaced the windows.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. McMahon, to table 831 Schuylkill Avenue until the August 1<sup>st</sup> determination hearing and direct Ms. Rodriguez-Antigua to allow a Property Maintenance inspection prior to August 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Mr. Eyrich stated that the committee hopes to see progress at the property at the August Determination Hearing.

### **12. 360 McKnight St., Musa Ardoli, owner, 56 Greenway Dr, Staten Island NY, Purchased Nov 2022**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Ardoli. He was provided with a property packet prior to the start of the hearing.

Ms. Scheuring entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows and she entered the property packet into the record:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on March 5, 2024
- Delinquent water charges \$814.10, Water off 2013
- Delinquent taxes \$145.99 2023 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – Poor condition, lack of maintenance, porch in poor condition
- Property Maintenance – \$25,404.94 total unpaid, 5 Work Orders, 9 NoV, Failed Inspection 9-18-22, 11 QoL Trash, 17 QoL Weeds, 4 QoL Indoor furniture, Failed inspection 10-5-23

*Note: delinquent Water includes sewer, trash, and recycling*

Mr. Ardoli explained that he is an out-of-state investor and that he cleared the overgrowth at the property since he took ownership. He stated that he has delayed making further improvements until he receives clear title to the property, as he does not want to spend money on the property if the former owner has the ability to reclaim the property.

Ms. Mayfield questioned the delay in filing a quiet title action with the Court of Common Pleas, as quiet title can be sought a year after the tax sale. She noted that it is currently 6 months beyond the year earmark.

Mr. Ardoli stated that he plans to have his attorney file for quiet title within the next month.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye, Mr. Ardoli stated that he plans to rehab and rent the property after he receives a clear title and the rehab at this property is not as extensive as others he owns. He stated that he purchased 15 properties at tax sale last year. He testified that he currently has 5 properties occupied and 4 others that he has not gotten quiet title for yet.

#### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Keith, to table 360 McKnight Street and directing Mr. Ardoli to file for quiet title to the property and allow an inspection by Property Maintenance prior to August 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**13. 143 Poplar St., Musa Ardoli, owner, 56 Greenway Dr, Staten Island NY, Purchased Nov 2022**

Ms. Mayfield reminded Mr. Ardoli that he remains under oath.

Ms. Scheuring entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows and entered the property packet into the record:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on March 5, 2024
- Delinquent water charges \$814.20, Water off 2012
- Delinquent taxes \$145.99 2023 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Property Maintenance – 5 Work Orders, 9 NoV, Failed inspection 9-8-22, 1 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Weeds

*Note: delinquent Water includes sewer, trash, and recycling*

Mr. Ardoli stated that the same situation exists with this property. He has not made major renovations as he does not have a clear title and the former owner could still reclaim the property. He added that he purchases tax sale properties blindly without any due diligence.

Ms. Mayfield again explained Mr. Ardoli's ability to file a quiet title action a year after a property is purchased at tax sale, noting that 18 months have passed. She explained the need for those who purchase tax sale properties to do their homework. She stated that while an interior inspection may not be an option prior to a tax sale purchase, it is possible to look at the outside and check Property Maintenance records.

Mr. Ardoli argued that it is impossible to perform due diligence on the 300-400 City properties that come up for tax sale annually.

Ms. Mayfield again noted the need to be responsible and perform some level of due diligence prior to purchasing tax sale properties, which will allow the new owner to receive a blighted property notice. She questioned the validity of the claim that there are 300-400 tax sale properties in Reading annually.

**Mr. Rye moved, seconded by Mr. McMahon, to table 143 Poplar Street and directing Mr. Ardoli to file for quiet title to the property and allow an inspection by Property Maintenance prior to August 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**14. 631 Elm St., Gladys Castillo, owner, 4114 7<sup>th</sup> Ave, Temple PA, Purchased Nov 2023**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Gladys Castillo. A property packet was provided to her prior to this hearing.

Ms. Scheuring entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows and entered the property packet into the record:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on March 5, 2024
- Delinquent water charges \$3901.99, Water off 2006
- Delinquent taxes \$725.03 2023 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – Roof collapsed, property fenced off to protect the public
- Codes – 3 Work order, 7 NoV, \$3969 total unpaid, 2 QoL Trash, 4 QoL Weeds

*Note: delinquent Water includes sewer, trash, and recycling*

In response to a question from Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Scheuring stated that this is a one unit

commercial property.

Ms. Castillo stated that she purchased this property at tax sale. She stated that the violations at the property occurred before she purchased the property. She stated that she plans to open an auto dealership at the property. She acknowledged that the City can take and demolish the property.

Ms. Castillo stated that someone from the City told her that he can do the demolition for a good price and then lien the property for the cost. She stated that she agreed to that plan. She stated that she was also contacted by someone from Kutztown offering assistance. She noted that she is waiting for the City official to contact her with an estimate. She stated that she can work with that plan. She added that she spoke with someone in Zoning about the dealership plan prior to purchasing the property.

In response to questions, Ms. Castillo stated that the City has not provided her with a demo price yet and that she has not obtained any bids on the cost of demolition. She again stated that after demolition she plans to open a car dealership on the vacant lot using a trailer as an office.

Ms. Castillo stated that someone called her from the City saying that they could demolish the property for approximately \$200,000 and he promised to email her the details but he has not followed through to date. She stated that she recently received a letter saying that the property is a hazard and needs to be demolished.

Mr. McMahon stated that the taxi business across the street is interested in the property as a vacant lot. She stated that she has not heard from the taxi business.

Ms. Castillo stated that she and her husband own American Management company here and they own 14 properties. She added that she and her husband operated a car dealership when they resided in Bronx, NY.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye about her capability to demolish the property, Ms. Castillo stated that the first City official she spoke with gave her a price between \$100,000 to \$120,000 demo estimate, but that person left for Texas. She expressed the belief that she can manage the demo cost and the cost to develop the dealership.

Mr. McMahon noted that this property is a public hazard. Ms. Castillo agreed, noting that prior to purchasing the property she thought it had already been demolished. She stated that she was also surprised of the need to pay for water at this property. She stated that when she spoke with the Fire Department about removing the sprinkler system, they said that they would approve the removal of the fire line. She noted her intent to visit the Fire Department

tomorrow.

Ms. Mayfield expressed doubt that the Fire Department would approve the removal of the sprinkler system at the building.

Mr. Baez inquired about the plans to obtain bids for demolition. Ms. Castillo stated that her plan is to wait for the City to demolish the property as the City official promised. She noted her agreement to having a lien for the cost attached to her property. She added that the official asked her to see if she could search for a more reasonable estimate. She stated that she will follow-up with the City.

Ms. Castillo was unable to recall the name of the official that she spoke with.

After Ms. Scheuring checked the property file, Ms. Mayfield stated that a notice to demo has not been issued by the City.

Ms. Scheuring stated that Ms. Castillo was sent a notice of unsafe structure and an order to demo or rehab by Building/Trades on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Mayfield stated that the standard letter says that the City could demolish the property; it does not say that the City will demolish.

Ms. Castillo stated that the person she spoke with told her that he needed to speak with the City's lawyer. She stated that Empire Wrecking told her that they estimated the demo cost at \$200,000 ten years ago and they did not provide an updated price.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Rye, to determine 631 Elm Street as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Consent Agenda**

Ms. Scheuring stated that the following properties do not have representation at this hearing and each property meets at least one (1) of the required blight criteria as follows. *(Note the numbers match those on the Property Summary Sheets)*

**3. 105 Peach St, Julio Reyes, owner, 102 S 9<sup>th</sup> St Reading PA, Purchased June 1999 -**

Delinquent taxes \$6309; Delinquent water No Water Service; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes -4 NoV, 1 QoL trash

**4. 471 Birch St, Lance Russell III, owner, 471 Birch St Reading Pa, Purchased June 1992**

- Delinquent taxes \$6309.07 2018-23 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$9657.81; Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes - \$945 total unpaid, 2 NoV, 6 QoL trash, 6 QoL

weeds, 2 QoL animal waste, 8 QoL indoor furniture outdoors

**6. 418 Douglass St, JAFT LLC, owner, 434 West St, Pottstown PA, Purchased June 2020**

- Posted on property 3-22-24; Delinquent taxes \$930.15 2023 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$2060.39 – Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades – N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 10 NoV, Failed Inspection 12-22-22; 2 QoL Trash, 4 QoL Weeds, \$1162.49 unpaid

**8. 645 N 9th St, JAFT LLC, owner, 434 West St, Pottstown PA, Purchase date unavailable**

- Delinquent taxes \$420.08 2023 City, County, School; Delinquent water – service abandoned; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 14 Work Order, 8 NoV, Failed inspection 10-25-23; Placard unsafe 2017; 29 QoL trash, 24 QoL weeds, 1 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$20890.01 total unpaid

**9. 604 N 9<sup>th</sup> St., Marco Castro, owner, 418 Green Tc, Reading, Purchased Sept 2017-**

Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$79.09, Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 4 Work Order, 7 NoV, Failed inspection 1-4-23, Placard unlawful 2013; 7 QoL trash, 16 QoL weeds, 1 QoL ice, \$23519.14 total unpaid

**11. 1035 Muhlenberg St., Cesarz Nunez, owner, 533 A Maple St Reading, Purchased Sept 2013 -**

Delinquent taxes \$599.47 2022-23 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$2520.22; Water off 2012; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades - Interior and exterior in very poor condition, no windows 2<sup>nd</sup> floor; Codes – 6 Work Order, 3 NoVs, Placard unlawful 7-9-23, 8 QoL trash, 8 QoL weeds, \$9622.07 unpaid

**16. 1132 Green St., Leonardo Gomez, owner, 270 Empire Blvd, Brooklyn NY, Purchased Jan 2022 -**

Delinquent taxes \$737.47 2023 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$38.87; Water off 2013; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades boarded up, property in poor condition, fenced off to protect the public; Codes – 3 Work Orders, 11 NoVs, Placard unlawful 2016, 1 QoL trash, 1 QoL weeds, 1 QoL ice, \$27837.81 unpaid

**17 1411 Cotton St., Golden Circle Realty LLC, owner, PO Box 664 Adamstown PA,**

**Purchased July 2022 -** Delinquent taxes \$13177.42 2016-23 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$1141.75; Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 12 NoV, 7 Work order, Failed inspection 9-8-22, 7 QoL trash, 19 QoL weeds, \$3702.08 unpaid

**18. 338 Pearl St., Golden Circle Realty LLC, owner, PO Box 664 Adamstown PA, Purchased July 2022 -**

Delinquent taxes \$19522.84 2009-23 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$13196.87; Water off 2012; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Property boarded up, poor condition, no power, no maintenance; Codes – 10 Work orders, 16 NoV, Failed inspection 9-8-22, 4 QoL trash, 22 QoL weeds 1 QoL indoor furniture outdoors

**20. 1417 Monroe St., JM Diamond Enterprises LLC, owner, 2 Albert Lane Reading 19607,**

**Purchased Aug 2023 -** Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$320.62; Water on; Electric

N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Order, 10 NoV, Failed inspection 7-20-22, 4 QoL trash, 12 QoL motor vehicle nuisance, 2 QoL unsafe swimming pool, \$3393 unpaid

**23. 849 Church St., ANG Homebuyers LLC, owner, 9015 148<sup>th</sup> St Jamaica NY, Purchased Oct 2023** - Delinquent taxes \$1100.45 2022 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$79.07; Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 10 NoV, Failed inspection 12-1-22, Placard unlawful 2021, 10 QoL trash, 4 QoL weeds, 3 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$10303 total unpaid

**Public Comment**

None.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Rye, to determine the consent agenda properties as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.**

No other business was brought forward. Mr. Eyrich announced that the certification hearing will be held on Thursday, June 6, 2024 and the work session is scheduled for Wednesday, May 29, 2024. Both will be conducted hybrid – in-person and Zoom.

**Mr. Keith moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to adjourn the hearing.**

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, Secretary*