
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, August 19, 2021
Virtual Meeting
Determination Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Urena, Chair, called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:29 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

Due to the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration, the public is unable to physically attend the meeting. Public participation is provided via virtual meeting application through the link included on the published agenda. All attendees are participating remotely by phone or electronically through a computer application.

Mr. Urena announced that the purpose of the hearing is to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda meet any of the 12 conditions defined by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended, and the City of Reading Blighted Property Review Committee Ordinance, and can be determined as blighted.

BPRC Attendance: J. Cepeda-Freytiz, L. Olsen, H. Urena, E. Schlegel - electronically

Staff Attendance: L. Kelleher, A. LaMano Esq., H. Scheuring - electronically

Mr. Urena stated that the minutes from the May Certification hearing were distributed electronically. He asked if any committee member wished to make corrections or changes.

Mr. Schlegel moved, seconded by Mr. Olsen, to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was approved unanimously.

PROPERTIES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE PROCESS

Mr. Urena stated that there are 24 properties to be removed from the certification list at this meeting.

Ms. Scheuring explained that all properties have utilities connected, are current on tax payments and have passed a Property Maintenance inspection.

Mr. Schlegel moved, seconded by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, to approve the de-certification of the properties listed on the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. LaMano reviewed the hearing process. Property packets were emailed to the property owners registered to attend the hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated that there are two properties

with representation present and the neighbor of a 3rd property wishes to provide public comment.

DETERMINATION HEARING

1. 438 S 6th St, Cesar Emilio Nunez, Owner, 533 A Maple St., Rdg., purchased Dec 2017
Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mr. Nunez.

Ms. LaMano entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on July 19, 2021
- Delinquent water charges \$5091.01 Water off 2016
- Delinquent taxes \$4414.66 2019-20 City, County, School
- Gas service off
- Electric service off
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 2 NoV, 2 Work Orders, Failed inspection 2019, \$5611.32 total unpaid, 15 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Indoor Furniture Outdoors, 1 QoL snow/ice
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Mr. Nunez stated that he purchased the property in 2018 and he recently paid off the delinquent taxes. He expressed the belief that the photographs being screen shared are not current and that the amount listed as unpaid to Property Maintenance for QoL tickets occurred before he purchased the property. He explained that he has been working with the Historic Preservation Specialist to obtain the proper permits.

Mr. Urena questioned if building permits were obtained. Mr. Nunez stated that he submitted an application on Wednesday. In response to a question, he stated that he can complete the work at the property in 60 days after the permits are issued and that he and his family intend to reside at this property. He noted that he owns 10 rental properties within Reading.

Mr. Schlegel stated that this property is located within the Prince Historic District and he questioned if the vinyl windows were approved by HARB. Mr. Nunez stated that the windows are aluminum and they are a temporary fix. The original wooden windows will be reinstalled when they are repaired and when the rehab of the property nears completion. He stated that Ms. Johnson was consulted about this temporary solution.

Mr. Urena thanked Mr. Nunez for attending and for beginning the permit application process. He encouraged him to stay in touch with Ms. Scheuring throughout the rehab.

Public Comment

There was no public comment for this property.

Mr. Schlegel moved, seconded by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, to table this property until the

March 2022 Determination Hearing to allow further evaluation. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Scheuring explained that a new hearing notice will be mailed in 2022 and the conditions at the property will be reevaluated at the March 2022 hearing.

10. 506 N 12th St, DBC LLC, owner, 113 Grande Blvd, Sinking Spring, Purchased May 2009

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Sean Moretti, who was authorized to represent the property by the property owner.

Ms. LaMano entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on July 19, 2021
- Delinquent water charges \$592.40 Water off
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service on
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 5 NoV, Failed inspection July 12, 2021, \$290 total unpaid, 14 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Mr. Moretti stated that he reviewed the property packet and visited the property this afternoon. He stated that he is not here to make excuses for the conditions at the property and he agreed that the property should be better maintained. He stated that the property owner agreed to install Plexiglas to secure the many broken windows. However, when he went to the property to take photos he found that this repair did not occur. He stated that he had hoped that he could show the Board that some improvement had occurred.

Mr. Moretti stated that the building is empty except for some debris in the basement and pigeon droppings in various areas. He stated that some framing was done in the 3rd floor. He stated that the property owner listed the property for sale with his real estate office and that the property received zoning for 30 rental units. *(Note: zoning was approved for 29 units, the basement unit was denied. The zoning permit has since expired.)*

Mr. Urena inquired about the last inspection and how long the building has been vacant. Ms. Scheuring stated that the property failed its inspection in July 2021. Ms. Kelleher stated that the zoning report shows that the building has been vacant since the early 1990s.

Mr. Schlegel inquired if building permits were issued for the roof replacement and the framing. Ms. Scheuring said she will check tomorrow.

Mr. Morretti stated that he and the property owner met with the Fire Marshal and

Building/Trades officials a few weeks ago to discuss the issues at the property. The property owner was asked to comply with some basic health and safety regulations; however, nothing was done to date. He emailed some recent external and internal photos of the property to Ms. Kelleher, who screen shared them. Mr. Moretti provided highlights.

Public Comment

There was no public comment for this property.

Mr. Schlegel moved, seconded by Mr. Olsen, to determine this property as blighted. Mr. Schlegel, Mr. Olsen and Mr. Urena voted yes and Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz voted no. The motion carried.

3. 1353 Walnut St., Dorrn Patience, owner, 1353 Walnut St, Purchased June 2006

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Tom Shade, who resides in the adjoining property and wants to comment about the property.

Ms. LaMano entered the following conditions into the record from the property summary sheet as follows:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on July 19, 2021
- Delinquent water charges \$7279.09 Water off 2015
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service on
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 18 NoV, \$1050 total unpaid, 9 QoL Weeds
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Public Comment

Mr. Shade stated that his adjoining property was owned by his parents for decades and he took title in 2011. On February 5, 2021 the roof over the deck at the rear of the property collapsed due to the weight of the snow. He explained that the properties share a common wall and the collapse caused some cosmetic damage to the common wall in his kitchen. The damage was covered by his property insurance but he does not want to make the repairs until the roof at 1353 is repaired. He noted that the collapse caused the rear wall of 1353 to separate from the house, exposing it to the elements.

Mr. Shade stated that the other homes in this block are well-maintained and this property is not. He stated that the owner does not reside at the property. He shows up occasionally, stays for a few hours then leaves.

Ms. Scheuring stated that there are 20 complaints entered about maintenance issues at 1353 resulting in 18 NoVs. Property Maintenance is currently attempting to take the many citations to court.

In response to a question, Ms. Scheuring stated that as the property is owner occupied – address of the owner matches the property address – there is little Property Maintenance can do, other than issue citations for the exterior conditions at the property.

Mr. Olsen suggested placarding the property as there is no water utility connection.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Mr. Schlegel, to determine this property as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Ms. LaMano 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)*

All properties received notice of the hearing mailed July 19, 2021, except 143 Poplar St. was posted with the hearing notice on August 2, 2021.

4. 42 N 11th St, Saul Delcid, owner, 9411 Forbell St Ozone Park NY, Purchased June 2021

- Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$144.78; Water off 2018; Electric off; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 2 NoV, 6 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, 1 QoL snow/ice

5. 110 S 6th St, Carlos Jose Ventura, owner, 359 W Douglass St, Rdg Purchased Feb 2016

- Delinquent taxes \$2228.10 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$2034.85; Water on; Electric on; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 NoV, 5 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Weeds, 2 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, \$1660 total unpaid

6. 143 Poplar St, Leon E Chambers, owner, 143 Poplar St, Rdg, Purchased Oct 1999

- Delinquent taxes \$4004.53 2018-19 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$2808.56; Water off 2019; Electric off; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 5 NoV, 1 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Weeds, \$185.50 total unpaid

7. 302 S 7th St, Edward L Spencer, owner, 302 S 7th St, Reading, Purchased Dec 1956

- Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$72.39; Water on; Electric off; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes –5 QoL Weeds

9. 323 N Front St, Bladimir Leyva Ortiz, owner, 135 Wunder St Rdg, Purchased April 2017

- Delinquent taxes \$4968.13 2016-20 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$14877.59; Water off; Electric off; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 4 Work Orders, 4 NoV, 21 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Snow/ice, \$4542.30 total unpaid, Failed inspection 2015, Placard unsafe 2017

11. 1246 Eckert Ave, Amadou Diakite, owner, 267 Edgecombe Ave Apt 51 NY NY,

Purchased May 2005 - Delinquent taxes \$2831.63 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$3055.84; Water on; Electric off; Gas on; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 NoV, 9 QoL trash, 10 QoL weeds, 2 QoL snow/ice, \$4596.31 total unpaid

12. 849 Church St, Virginia Ortega, owner, 849 Church St, Purchased Aug 1996 - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$80.41; Water on; Electric on; Gas on; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Orders, 6 NoV, Failed inspection Aug 9, 2021; Placard unlawful April 9, 2021, \$9403 total unpaid

13. 942 N 5th St, Bienvenido Baez, owner, 942 N 5th, Reading, Purchased May 2021 - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$707.68; Water on; Electric on; Gas on; Trades N/A; Codes – 3 Work Orders, 8 NoV, 13 QoL trash, 8 QoL Weeds, 4 QoL Motor vehicle nuisance, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, \$4275.50 total unpaid

15. 153 Walnut St, Ronald Heckman, owner, 2428 S Fountain St, Allentown Purchased Mar 1994 - Delinquent taxes \$1173.58 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$5076.63; Water off 2018; Electric off; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 5 NoV, 2 QoL Trash, 8 QoL Weeds, Failed inspection 2012, Placard unlawful 2013, \$7101.13 total unpaid

16. 216 Plum St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased April 2007 - Delinquent taxes \$153.86 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric off; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 2 NoV, 12 QoL Trash, 14 QoL Weeds, \$1952.19 total unpaid

17. 218 Plum St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased Feb 2007 - Delinquent taxes \$153.86 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 3 Work Orders, 2 NoV, 12 QoL Trash, 18 QoL Weeds, \$3151.94 total unpaid

18. 220 Plum St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased Feb 2007 - Delinquent taxes \$113.31 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 6 Work Orders, 6 NoV, 15 QoL Trash, 21 QoL Weeds, \$4873.19 total unpaid

19. 222 Plum St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased Feb 2007 - Delinquent taxes \$103.14 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 6 Work Orders, 4 NoV, 18 QoL Trash, 21 QoL Weeds, \$4727 total unpaid

20. 223 N 6th St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased Feb 2007 - Delinquent taxes \$148.77 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 NoV, 5 QoL Trash, 7 QoL Weeds, \$2935 total unpaid

21. 225 S 6th St, Pennsylvania Artist LP, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased April 2006 - Delinquent taxes \$148.77 2020 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 2 NoV, 5 QoL Trash, 7 QoL Weeds, \$1136 total unpaid

24. 423 Tulpehocken St, John and Martha McCarty, owner, 423 Tulpehocken St Rdg Purchased Sept 1956 - Delinquent taxes \$1758.57 2018-20 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$3134.94; Water on; Electric on; Gas off; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 NoV, 9 QoL Trash, 3 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, \$190 total unpaid

25. 1853 N 3rd St., Anoread LLC Commercial Development Co., 1515 Des Peres Rd., Ste 300, St Louis MO, purchased Sept 2016 - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water N/A; Water N/A; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 9 NoV, 2 QoL Trash, 11 QoL weeds, \$120 total unpaid

Public Comment

There was no public comment for these properties.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Mr. Schlegel, to determine the consent agenda properties as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. Schlegel thanked Mr. Urena for making the report to Council, highlighting the need to provide follow through after the properties are certified. He stated that the Reading Redevelopment Authority agrees and is beginning the acquisition process for two properties on Schuylkill Avenue.

No other business was brought forward. Mr. Urena announced that the determination hearing will be held on Thursday, October 21, 2021.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, to adjourn the hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, Secretary