
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, August 18, 2022
Hybrid Meeting
Determination Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Urena, Chair, called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:01 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

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: H. Urena, N. Eyrich, W. Bealer – in person and M. Wolfe and J. Cepeda-Freytiz– virtually

Staff Attendance: F. Lachat, Esq., H. Scheuring – electronically and L. Kelleher – in person

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

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

PROPERTIES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE PROCESS

None.

DETERMINATION HEARING

2. 545 Centre Ave., Antonia Panohaya, owner, 545 Centre Ave Rdg PA, Purchased March 2010

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Panohaya, who was connected virtually. A property packet was sent to Ms. Panohaya via email on August 17th.

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges \$2988.04 Water on
- Delinquent taxes \$5335.04 2018-21 City, County, School

- Gas service off 2016
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 2 NoV, 2 Work Orders, \$4395 total unpaid, 17 QoL Trash, 5 QoL Weeds, 6 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Ms. Panohaya stated that she began working on the exterior in December 2021 and she is making progress. She explained that she had health problems when the issues at the property began. She stated that Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz provided her with assistance and support to clean-up the exterior in the past. She stated that the issue is currently in the MDJ court system and a hearing is scheduled before MDJ Butler in September. She questioned why this issue is proceeding prior to the court hearing. She stated that she has completed payment plan arrangements with RAWA and the County Treasurer.

Ms. Scheuring displayed copies of the payment plan agreements and photos of the exterior of the property.

Mr. Bealer inquired about the tarps that are hanging in the area of the side yard. Ms. Panohaya stated that she installed the tarps to block the view of nosy neighbors and to protect her privacy.

In response to a question from Mr. Urena, Ms. Panohaya stated that she resides in this mixed use property with one kitchen, one bath and five bedrooms. She inquired about how she should address the harassment she is receiving from Property Maintenance and her neighbors. She stated that she continues to work on the exterior issues at the property.

In response to a question from Mr. Urena, Ms. Scheuring stated that the last complaint-based inspection was in April.

Public Comment

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Mike Lauter.

Mr. Lauter, Executive Director of the Centre Park Historic District, stated that he is attending representing the neighborhood about the long-term issues at this property. The exterior of this property has been a problem for many years with little or no resolve. He stated that neighbors began reporting the problem to the City when they could no longer use their backyards due to the stench, bugs and rodents emanating from the property. He stated that clearly there are hoarding issues at this property. He stated that years ago the City sent a crew to clear all the debris in the yard; however, the problem restarted leading to additional complaints. While he agreed that everyone is entitled to privacy, neighbors are entitled to a

good quality of life and that quality of life is jeopardized by the conditions in Ms. Panohaya's yard. He expressed hope that she will clear the problem and prevent it from restarting.

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Evelyn Morrison.

Ms. Morrison, no address provided, suggested providing social services to the property owner to assist with her wellbeing.

Ms. Panohaya expressed the belief that the rodents are coming from the railroad property that adjoins her property and not from her property.

Ms. Wolfe stated that she will abstain from the vote as Ms. Panohaya is a parishioner of her church.

Mr. Bealer moved to determine 545 Centre Ave as a blighted property. The motion failed due to the lack of a 2nd motion.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to table 545 Centre Ave. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Eyrich stated that the property can be revisited at the next Determination hearing after the September court hearing.

7. 730 Bingaman St, Francisco Dominguez, owner, 407 S 9th St, Reading, Purchased Jan 2022

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Dominguez, who was connected virtually. Mr. Dominguez was provided with an electronic copy of the property packet on August 17th.

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges \$77.39 Water off
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service off 1990
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 3 NoV, 1 Work Order, 2 QoL Trash, 4 QoL Weeds
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Mr. Dominguez stated that he became the property owner in March 2022 and he does not understand why his water bill is so high when the property is vacant. He stated that he will

pay down the water bill, noting that he paid off the delinquent taxes. He stated that he continues to work to improve the interior of the property and requested additional time. In response to a question from Mr. Urena, Ms. Scheuring stated that Property Maintenance inspections were scheduled for May and July of this year and Mr. Dominguez was a no show on both dates. The next inspection is scheduled for November. She encouraged Mr. Dominguez to allow the inspection as that will permit him to apply for a rehab agreement which provides greater flexibility on the inspection timelines. She also encouraged Mr. Dominguez to call the office to request an earlier inspection date so he can obtain a rehab agreement more quickly.

In response to a question from Mr. Urena, Mr. Dominguez stated that he received a zoning permit but he has not yet applied for building improvements.

Mr. Dominguez stated that he is not receiving the notices sent by the City. Ms. Scheuring asked Mr. Dominguez to come into the office to fill out a form to change his mailing address.

Public Comment

There was no public comment for this property.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to table this property until the March 2023 Determination Hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. 111 Mulberry St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased April 2011

9. 906 N 5th St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased May 2006

10. 125 S 8th St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased Dec 2006

Mr. Lachat questioned if Mr. Henriquez's attorney, Stephen Otto, Esq., objected to addressing the properties as a group, as they are all owned by Mr. Hernandez. Mr. Otto did not object.

Mr. Lachat stated that each property will have a separate vote.

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Henriquez. Copies of the three property packets were provided at the hearing.

111 Mulberry St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased April 2011

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges N/A Water off N/A
- Delinquent taxes \$894.26 2021 County, School
- Gas service off 2015
- Electric service N/A
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 6 NoV, 1 Work order. \$10,112.50 total unpaid
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

906 N 5th St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased May 2006

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges N/A Water on
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 2 NoV, 1 Work order, \$16,039.06 total unpaid, 9 QoL Trash, 14 QoL Weeds, 5 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

125 S 8th St, Andres Henriquez, owner, 142 N 10th St, Reading PA, Purchased Dec 2006

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges \$124.75 Water on
- Delinquent taxes \$9505.84 2015-21 City, County, School
- Gas service off 2004
- Electric service N/A
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 6 NoV, \$10,505 total unpaid, 3 QoL Trash, 1 QoL Snow, 1 QoL Snow/Ice, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Mr. Otto stated that he and his client were only aware that 125 S. 8th Street was on the hearing agenda. He inquired if the hearing could be continued to allow them to prepare.

Mr. Otto stated that the delinquent water charges were paid prior to the start of the hearing. He requested detail about the unpaid fees. He stated that his client's bankruptcy was discharged in 2017 and the City was on notice. He stated that one property has a tenant and he questioned if under the blighted criteria, it is eligible to be deemed a blighted property.

Ms. Scheuring stated that none of Mr. Hernandez's properties are registered as rental properties with Property Maintenance, which is required annually. She explained that all properties owned by Mr. Hernandez owe a total of \$64,000 for unpaid housing registration and no show/cancelled inspections fees over multiple years.

Ms. Scheuring screen shared the property records in the Hansen database for the three properties showing the multiple cancellations and no shows/cancelations along with the lack of rental registration for inspections.

Mr. Otto stated that he believes that Mr. Hernandez obtained zoning for the properties and that the property packet shows record of an inspection in 2017 at 125 S 8th St. Ms. Scheuring stated that the inspection was complaint based and it was not the rental housing inspection that must be conducted every two years.

Mr. Otto stated that his client received only one hearing notification, not three. Ms. Scheuring stated that all three notices were mailed on the same day to the address listed as the mailing address for the property. She noted that none of the notices were returned as undeliverable. She encouraged Mr. Hernandez to come to the Property Maintenance office to change the mailing address and discuss the rental registration issue.

Mr. Hernandez expressed the belief that the three properties are in good condition. He stated that he emailed Ms. Scheuring and Ms. Kelleher proof of payment from RAWA and new photos of the properties earlier today. He stated that Property Maintenance cancelled the inspection scheduled for today at one of the properties.

Ms. Scheuring stated that today's inspection was cancelled to get all Mr. Hernandez's properties on the same schedule to avoid inconveniencing Mr. Hernandez with multiple inspection requests at various days/times. The next inspection of all properties is scheduled for October. She encouraged Mr. Hernandez to call to request an earlier inspection date and to come in to address the rental registration issue and unpaid fees. Mr. Hernandez agreed to an appointment with Ms. Scheuring on August 23rd at 9 am in the Property Maintenance Office.

In response to a question from Mr. Eyrich, Mr. Hernandez stated that he has had the same tenant residing in 125 S 8th Street for 5-8 years.

In response to a question from Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, Ms. Scheuring stated that the complaint on 125 S 8th St. was initiated in February 2022 and she screen shared the photos of the properties. Mr. Hernandez stated that Property Maintenance Inspector Marte was at the property today and he stated that the complaint has been resolved. He noted his intent to change the mailing address to a PO Box to eliminate future issues.

Mr. Hernandez stated that 906 N 5th Street is a four unit property and he resides in one of the units at the property.

Public Comment

Still under oath, Ms. Morrison stated that she is a community advocate and she noted the need for people who undertake economic development initiatives to be supported by City grants which would reduce enforcement issues. She expressed the belief that the City's ordinances are misguided and their enforcement creates multilevel problems for property owners. She expressed the belief that the City's Recovery funds should be used to support people in need.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to remove 125 S 8th St from consideration. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to table 111 Mulberry St. until the determination hearing in March 2023.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to table 906 N 5th St. until the determination hearing in March 2023.

20. 766 Schuylkill Ave, Ignacio Ramos-Reyes, owner, 1909 S 7th St, Philadelphia PA, Purchased July 2021

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Ramos-Reyes. He was provided with a property packet.

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022
- Delinquent water charges \$49.89 Water off 2020
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service off 2020
- Electric service N/A
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – 1 Work Order, \$763 total unpaid, 1 QoL Weeds
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling – N/A

Mr. Ramos-Reyes stated that he purchased the property in 2021 and has been working to rehabilitate it since March 25th. He stated that he has obtained a building permit to replace the porch and roof and that he has paid off the taxes. He described the problems he is having obtaining plumbing and electrical permits.

Ms. Scheuring confirmed that the property is registered as vacant and that there is a building permit issued, as stated, that will expire in October 2022. She stated that there is no record of a rehab agreement and she encouraged Mr. Ramos-Reyes to obtain one to allow additional flexibility.

Mr. Bealer explained that plumbing and electrical permits need to be obtained by licensed contractors and these trades permits are not issued to the property owner who is not licensed in these fields. Ms. Kelleher confirmed, noting that if Mr. Ramos-Reyes uses a contractor who is licensed in another municipality, he can obtain a reciprocal license to operate in Reading.

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz stated that Mr. Ramos-Reyes purchased a property in blighted condition and he is diligently working to improve it. Others agreed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment for this property.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, to remove 766 Schuylkill Avenue from consideration. The motion was approved unanimously.

21. 56 Crestmont St, Sixto Henriquez, owner, 1102 Tuckerton Rd Reading PA 19605, Purchased April 2010

Ms. Kelleher stated that she spoke with Mr. Henriquez before the hearing and he noted the need for translation services as his wife is unavailable to assist him. Mr. Henriquez told Ms. Kelleher that he called City Hall to request a translator earlier today. Ms. Kelleher stated that staff was unable to secure translation services in time for tonight's hearing. She recommended tabling the property.

Public Comment

There was no public comment for this property.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz, to table 56 Crestmont St. until the March 2023 determination hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lachat stated that the remaining property owners are not present in person or virtually and that these properties will be handled through the Consent Agenda process, if there are no

objections. No one objected.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Lachat 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 14, 2022 or posted on August 11th if the mailed notice was returned as undeliverable.

6. 438 S 6th St, Cesar Emilio Nunez, owner, 533A Maple St., Rdg PA, Purchased Dec 2017

Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$6132.61, Water off; Electric N/A; Gas on; Trades N/A; Codes –2 NoV, 4 QoL trash, 4 QoL weeds, \$6575 total unpaid

7. 152 Elm St, McKnight's Cafe, owner, 152 Elm St, Reading, Purchased March 1999 – Tabled at the March 2022 Determination Hearing

Delinquent taxes \$21,580.09 2015-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$60,853.61, Water off 2019; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 7 NoV, 2 QoL trash, 2 QoL weeds, 1 QoL ice, \$1130 total unpaid

11. 1353 N 10th St, owner, David Crespo, 5918 57th St, Maspeth NY, Purchased June 2012

Delinquent taxes \$4739.32 2020-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$4705.17, Water off 2019; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, Placard unlawful 2014, 5 QoL trash, 6 QoL weeds, \$4390 total unpaid

12. 645 S 17th ½ St, DSV SPV2 LLV, owner, PO Box 1348 Lexington SC, Purchased July 2017

Delinquent taxes \$4794 2019-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$5372.61, Water off 2019; Electric N/A; Gas off 2019; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 9 NoV, 15 QoL weeds, \$33190.50 total unpaid

14. 833 Schuylkill Ave, David Davis, owner, PO Box 681 Reading PA, Purchased June 2007

Delinquent taxes \$12965.36 2013-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$14973.32, Water off; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 1 Work Order, 6 NoV, Placard unsafe 2013, 6 QoL trash, 7 QoL weeds, 5 QoL motor vehicle nuisance, \$6580 total unpaid

15. 726 Franklin St, Maribel DeJesus, owner, PO Box 128 NY NY, Purchased Aug 2018

Delinquent taxes \$2066.32 2020-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$7785.25, Water off 2018; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 5 Work Orders, 12 NoV, 24 QoL trash, 10 QoL weeds, 3 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, 1 QoL motor vehicle nuisance, \$51887.38 total unpaid

16. 804 Chestnut St, John Caba, owner, 804 Chestnut St Reading PA, Purchased Nov 2021

Delinquent taxes \$2382.11 2020-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water N/A, Water off N/A; Electric N/A; Gas off 2004; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 NoV, 1 QoL trash, 3 QoL weeds, 1 QoL animal waste, 3 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$320 total unpaid

17. 149 Maitland St, Jose Martinez, owner, 246 S White Horse Pike Berlin NJ, Purchased Aug 2021

Delinquent taxes \$646.03 2020-21 City, County, School; Delinquent water No service; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 5 NoV, 1 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$1750 total unpaid

19. 8 Nottingham Ct, Peter Raber, owner, 8 Nottingham Ct Rdg PA, Purchased March 1993

Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$3667.77, Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades N/A; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 8 NoV, 3 QoL weeds, \$1459 total unpaid

Public Comment

None.

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

Ms. Morrison questioned the use of the Consent Agenda process when the property owner is not present at the hearing. Mr. Bealer stated that the blighted property process is implemented locally under the Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945,¹² as amended by Act 94 of 1978, further amended by Act 113 of 2002, through hearing due process. She stated that the process used by the Board was created several years ago, based on the practice of other municipalities. She suggested revising the process.

Mr. Urena stated that he will be reaching out to the members regarding a discussion on properties that have been certified as blighted.

No other business was brought forward. Mr. Urena announced that the certification hearing will be held on Thursday, October 20, 2022. This hearing will be conducted in hybrid – in-person and via Zoom.

Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to adjourn the hearing.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher City Clerk CMC, Secretary