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**Blighted Property Review Committee**  
**Thursday, November 30, 2023**  
**Hybrid Meeting**  
**Determination Hearing**  
**Meeting Report**

Mr. Eyrich called the Determination Hearing to order at 6:13 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

**BPRC Attendance:** T. McMahon, N. Eyrich, C. Miller, P. Rye – in person and M. Wolfe – 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.

Ms. Mayfield apologized for arriving late due to a traffic accident on Rt. 422.

**Mr. McMahon moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to approve the minutes from the June Certification Hearing as distributed. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**PROPERTIES TO BE REMOVED FROM THE BLIGHTED LIST**

Mr. Eyrich stated that there are no properties to be removed at this meeting.

**Determination Hearing**

Ms. Mayfield reviewed the hearing process. She stated that Ms. Scheuring will be putting the qualifying criteria on the record for those properties with representation at the hearing in person and virtually.

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

**1. 1343 R Mineral Spring Rd., Jose Corniel Gomez & Maria Del Car Ortega De Gomez, owner, 1222 N 14<sup>th</sup> St, Rdg, Purchased March 2023**

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 November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$49.89, Water off
- Delinquent taxes N/A

- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – No roof, in disrepair, lack of maintenance
- Codes – 1 QoL Weeds, 1 QoL Swimming pool in disrepair, \$150 unpaid fees

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

Ms. Shay stated that she is the attorney representing the property owners. Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Ms. Shay, Jose Corniel Gomez & Maria Del Car Ortega De Gomez. A property packet was provided prior to the start of the hearing.

Ms. Shay stated that the property owners speak Spanish and she will interpret for them during the hearing. She stated that the property owners would prefer to be provided with more time to work on the property or to have the property removed from the process. She stated that although the affidavit from Trades questions the lack of maintenance, her clients have told her that the property is maintained and cleaned. She agreed that the ceiling is missing but due to the recent visit by Property Maintenance the lack of maintenance should no longer be in question.

Ms. Shay stated that the property owners purchased this property in March 2023 and they were unaware about the exiting condition of the property until seeing the notices posted. She stated that the property owners are working to correct the problems with this property. She stated that they are currently working to receive estimates and inspections with repair recommendations. She requested additional time to take these initial steps.

Ms. Scheuring stated that the property recently failed a Property Maintenance inspection due to the missing roof. She noted that since becoming aware of this hearing, the owners have made an effort to clear the debris at the property.

In response to questions from Mr. Rye, Ms. Shay stated that the owners intend to obtain estimates to replace the roof and she requested a two (2) year delay in these proceedings. She stated that she estimates the roof could be replaced within a year. She stated that she has been assisting the property owners since September, due to their lack of English proficiency. She stated that the property owners first learned about the City's issues with the property in July/August 2023 when the first notice was posted on the property.

Mr. Eyrich noted the need to obtain the required building permits.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye, Ms. Shay stated that the owner intends to open a garage to repair vehicles.

In response to a question from Mr. McMahon, Ms. Shay stated that at this point she cannot predict when the roof will be replaced. She stated that the property owner is a mechanic with an existing business and he intends to transfer his existing business to this new location.

Ms. Mayfield noted the need to check to see if a garage use is permitted in this zoning district before going too far with repairs.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. McMahon, to table this property until the April Determination Hearing conditioned upon the need to obtain building permits, construction estimates, obtain zoning for the intended use and pay down the delinquencies. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Ms. Shay stated that her paralegal will serve as interpreter for Ms. De Nieves at the next hearing. There was no objection.

**16. 226 N 4<sup>th</sup> St., Angela Justina Garcia De Nieves, owner, 1814 Woodbine St Ridgewood NY, Purchased March 2014**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Angela Justina Garcia De Nieves and interpreter Natalia Ortiz Amaro. 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 November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$106.55; Water off since 2019
- Delinquent taxes \$2319.53 2022 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – Boarded up, lack of maintenance
- Codes – 6 NoV, 2 Work Orders, \$8630.75 total unpaid, Failed inspection 8/2/23, 15 QoL Trash, 8 QoL Weeds, 2 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors, 1 QoL No trash hauler

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

Ms. Mayfield inquired if the property owner understands the City's concerns with this property. The interpreter stated that the property owner believes that the problems at the property are caused by people illegally entering this property. She added that the property is vacant.

In response to a question from Ms. Mayfield, Ms. Scheuring stated that the City paid two work orders to secure the property with boards.

In response to a question from Ms. Mayfield about the City's costs to secure the property, the interpreter stated that the property owner recently came to the house to begin clearing out the debris and that there was so much debris that she had to hire a service to assist. The property owner noted her depression since finding that the house had no electrical or water service that she has since reinstated. The property owner realizes the problems associated with leaving the property vacant and that she intends to reside in the property with her daughter.

In response to a question from Ms. Mayfield about her lack of response to the various City notices, the interpreter stated that the property owner does not speak English so she did not respond. She also stated that her last visit to the house was in September 2023, on the day of the postponed Determination hearing. She also stated that no one has resided in the property since she purchased it. She promised to hire people to assist with the repairs to the house.

Mr. Rye noted the lapse in maintenance for the past 10-years has created the problematic conditions. She requested a year to make the repairs.

Ms. Mayfield noted that this is the first of a two-step hearing process and she and Ms. Wolfe inquired if a rehab agreement could be filed.

The interpreter stated that the property owner intends to payoff the taxes tomorrow.

Ms. Scheuring explained the delinquencies exceed \$11,000.

The interpreter stated that the property owner relayed that she began fixing the property but stopped after the robbery because she was frightened.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

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

Mr. Eyrich stated that the committee hopes to see progress at the property at the January 17<sup>th</sup> Certification Hearing.

**3. 6. 936 Muhlenberg St, Aaron Anthony Torres, owner, 936 Muhlenberg St, Reading PA, Purchased March 2023 - **TABLED April 2023****

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Torres. 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 November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$535.06, Water off 2021
- Delinquent taxes \$541.78 2020-21 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – Fire damaged, condemned for occupancy
- Codes – \$150 total unpaid, 1 QoL Animal Waste, 1 QoL Weeds, 2 QoL Trash, Failed inspection 10-5-23

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

Mr. Torres stated that he has replaced all the windows, started interior demolition, replaced and painted the exterior railing, replaced the plumbing system, etc. He stated that the Property Maintenance Inspector only identified two remaining issues. He plans to repair the sidewalk next and replace the electrical system after the framing is completed.

Ms. Scheuring displayed photos comparing those that the committee viewed in April 2023 vs. November 2023 showing marked improvements.

In response to a question from Ms. Mayfield about the unpaid fees, Mr. Torres stated that if that is his responsibility, he will pay that off.

In response to a question from Mr. Rye about the water service, Mr. Torres stated that water service was restored but an immediate leak was discovered, which was repaired on the RAWA side of the system. He stated that he is not restoring the water service until the house is completed. He noted that he rents the property next to 936 Muhlenberg St. He stated that he and his family originally leased 936. After a fire at 936 caused his wife and two children to perish, he decided to purchase the property in 2023 through a private sale. He stated that he plans to reside at the property when it is completed.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Rye to remove the property from the process. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**21. 1009 N 12<sup>th</sup> St., Jose DeJesus, owner, PO Box 8603 Reading PA, Purchased April 2018**

Ms. Kelleher administered the oath to Jose De Jesus. A copy of the property 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 as follows and entered the property packet into the record:

- Notice mailed to the property owner via first class mail on November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$6910.03, Water off 2012
- Delinquent taxes \$994.38 2022 City, County, School
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – N/A
- Codes – Failed inspection 6-20-23, 2 NoV, \$1885 unpaid, 4 QoL Trash, 12 QoL Weeds, 1 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors

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

Mr. De Jesus stated that he purchased the property at the 2018 Free and Clear Tax Sale. Since then he has worked to make property improvements. However, a crack in the sewer pipe in the adjoining property (1011 N 12<sup>th</sup>) is causing raw sewage to leak into his basement and it is beginning to damage his sidewalk. He stated that he spoke with the adjoining property owner about this cracked sewer pipe, but the property owner has not corrected the problem. He stated that the repair was estimated at \$17,000. He stated that the City's Plumbing Inspector agreed that the sewer problem is on the adjoining property. No further action from the Plumbing Inspector or the neighbor has occurred. He noted that the delinquent water charges accompanied the property following the tax sale.

Ms. Scheuring stated that in June a rehab plan was approved and the next inspection is scheduled for August 2024.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. Rye, to table the property until the August 2024 Determination Hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.**

There was next a discussion on options to cure the sewage problem at 1011 N 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Miller explained that 1011 sits back behind 1009 and the leaking pipe is located between the foundation of 1011 and the curb line, which is causing the sewage to leak into 1009, rather than into 1011. Ms. Scheuring was asked to follow-up with the Plumbing Inspector.

**7. 545 Centre Ave, Antonia Panohaya, owner, 545 Centre Ave, Rdg, Purchased March 2010 –  
TABLED August 2022 and April 2023**

Ms. Scheuring explained that the property has now brought the property into compliance –

the external debris has been removed and the exterior has been painted. She recommended removing the property from the process. The committee unanimously agreed.

**28. 514 Minor St., Jonathan Cullen, owner, 148 Caitlin Dr, Birdsboro, Purchased Feb 2020 –  
TABLED APRIL 2023**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Alaudin Muja, who recently purchased the property. A property packet was emailed to him this afternoon.

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 November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$78.72, Water off 2010
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – Windows missing throughout, boarded up
- Codes – 1 Work order, 5 NoV, \$7788 total unpaid, Failed inspection 1-9-23, Placard unsafe 5-18, 1 QoL Trash, 4 QoL Weeds, 1 QoL Snow/Ice

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

Mr. Muja stated that he purchased this property in September and entered into a rehab agreement. He explained the improvements to the property since his purchase – new windows and doors, new electric system, etc. He stated that he is beginning to work on the plumbing system and the interior demolition. He explained that the electric service will not be reconnected until the interior framing is finished. He stated that the electric service cannot be turned on until an inspection occurs. He stated that he plans to make this a single family rental when the rehab is complete.

The committee noted the vast improvements made since September and they congratulated Mr. Muja for his work to date.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Eyrich moved, seconded by Mr. McMahon, to table the property until the April Determination hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**10. 1400 Hill Rd, Reading Hill LLC, owner, 140 Remsen St 2nd Fl Brooklyn NY, Purchased Aug 26, 2021**

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Goltzman, who attended virtually. Their attorney, Mr. Koch was present in person.

Ms. Schuering 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 November 1, 2023
- Delinquent water charges \$857.72, Water on
- Delinquent taxes N/A
- Gas service N/A
- Electric service N/A
- Trades – multiple boarded windows and doors, overgrowth of weeds/brush
- Codes – 4 NoV, 2 Work Orders, \$732.25 total unpaid, Failed inspection 3/16/23, 7 QoL Weeds, 1 QoL snow/ice

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

Mr. Koch stated that he was under the impression that the CD Deputy Director was going to remove the property from tonight's agenda and he expected that to happen.

Mr. Lachat, City Solicitor, stated that the City administration believes that this property should not be considered by the BPRC as the property is moving through the land use process. He expressed the belief that as this is a City board, the City administration can control the agenda and the properties under consideration. He asked the board to consider requests from the administration. He asked the board to withdraw or table this property, noting that if improvements are not made the board can reconsider this property in the future.

Mr. Eyrich stated that the board had internal discussions about the issues at this property. He stated that tabling could be considered; however, he noted his personal observations at this property over the past 6+ months. He added that when he visited the property today, he counted 12 broken, unsecured windows.

Mr. Goltzman, who is representing the property owner, interrupted Mr. Eyrich and stated that Mr. Eyrich's remarks are inaccurate. He expressed the belief that every time the City or a neighbor brings a complaint about the condition of the property to his attention, the issue is quickly resolved. He described the amount of funding spent to date on this project. He expressed the belief that the building is vacant, not blighted. He stated that the building has suffered from rampant criminal activity. He described the steps taken to resolve major water damage. He expressed the belief that making this a blighted property will harm the developer's ability to seek funding to complete the project at the property, forcing them to take legal action.



Mr. Koch read the email written by Dep. CD Director Geltz to Ms. Scheuring to request the withdrawal of 1400 Hill Rd. from tonight's agenda. He asked the board to remove the property from the blighted list.

Mr. Eyrich explained that prior to obtaining a blight designation, a property must go through a two-step hearing process – determination, followed by certification. He stated that the Determination Hearing occurring tonight is the first step.

Mr. Goltzman again interrupted and talked about their ability to attend to complaints quickly when they are identified by the City or a neighbor. He noted the hundreds of thousands of dollars the developer has invested in this property and their desire to complete this project.

Mr. Koch asked the board to withdraw the property from the agenda. While he agreed that the property meets the blight criteria he asked that the property be withdrawn to avoid creating roadblocks to the completion of the project at the property.

Mr. Goltz again described their intent to react quickly when complaints occur, including driving down from the NY area in the middle of the night. He noted that the addition of a security system has greatly reduced break-ins. He described the training the Police Department has conducted in this building under the current ownership.

Mr. Lachat agreed that having this property on the agenda and potentially the blighted list will hamper the development of this property. He agreed with the need to withdraw or table the property.

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment for this property.

**Mr. Rye moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, to remove the property from the process, under the condition that property improvements are taken care of expeditiously and if not the board will reconsider beginning the blighted property process again. 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)*

All properties received notice of the hearing mailed November 1, 2023.

**2. 429 A Locust St, Amazon Real Estate LLC, owner, 3229 State Hill Rd Reading, Purchased**

**Aug 2023 - TABLED April 2023** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$242.48; Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Property in disrepair, windows missing; Codes – \$3573.70 total unpaid, 1 Work order, 4 NoV, 1 QoL trash, 4 QoL weeds

**3. 548 Miltimore St, Francisco A Mendez Tiburcio & Juana De Deveaux, owner, 1339 N 11<sup>th</sup> St, Purchased June 2021 - TABLED April 2023** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water N/A – no water service; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades - No windows, poor condition, new siding, no building permits, stop work order pending, Codes – 1 QoL Trash

**4. 448 Mulberry St, City Construction Services LLC, owner, 41 Oak Ln Lebanon PA, Purchased June 2012 - TABLED April 2023** - Delinquent taxes \$703.25 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$13475.58, Water off 2013; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Fire damaged and boarded up; Codes – 5 Work Order, 3 NoV, 18 QoL trash, 14 QoL weeds, 6 QoL motor vehicle nuisance, 4 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$13669.35 total unpaid

**8. 527 Maple St, Stephanie Nicole Russell & Cesar Emilio Nunez, owner, 533A Maple St Reading PA, Purchased Aug 2019 - TABLED April 2023** - Delinquent taxes \$636.64 2022 City, County School; Delinquent water \$12470.29, Water off 2012; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Being restored, some new windows and doors, new siding; Codes – 6 Work Order, 2 NoV, Failed inspection 10\9\23, 13 QoL trash, 11 QoL weeds, 4 QoL Motor vehicle nuisance, \$18272.26 total unpaid

**9. 136 Greenwich St, Manuel Frutos, owner, 304 W Oley St Reading, Purchased Oct 2006 – TABLED April 2023** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$78.89; Water off 2013; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Lack of maintenance, boarded windows, front porch in disrepair; Codes – 1 Work Order, 7 NoVs, 4 QoL trash, 1 QoL snow/ice, 7 QoL weeds

**11. 728 N Front St, Iwona Nawrot, owner, 3905 Ardmore Ave Reading, Purchased Feb 1998** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$743.27; Water on; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Disrepair, porch deck unsafe, need to rebuild; Codes – 3 NoVs, Failed inspection 7\28\23, 6 QoL trash, 1 QoL animal waste, \$185 unpaid

**12. 744 Franklin St., 744 Franklin Street Properties, owner, 477 Colonial Rd Ridgewood NJ, Purchased Nov 2021** - Delinquent taxes \$1831.25 2022 County and School; Delinquent water \$4915.04; Water off 2015; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades boarded up, vacant unmaintained; Codes – 1 NoV, 1 Work order, Failed inspection 2018, 5 QoL trash, 3 QoL weeds, 1 QoL snow\ice, 1 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$940 unpaid

**15. 130 S 8<sup>th</sup> St., Rafael Devadip Lugo, owner, 75 W End Ave Apt C21D NY NY, Purchased Feb 2010** - Delinquent taxes \$1641.29 2022 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$9109.09; Water off 2013; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Property boarded up, abandoned vehicles; Codes – 4 NoV, Failed inspection 4\27\23, 1 QoL trash, 7 motor vehicle nuisance, \$11049.87

total unpaid

**17. 515 Schuylkill Ave., Herbert Carter Jr & Eleanor Wall, owner, 515 Schuylkill Ave Reading, Purchased April 1982** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$65.96; Water off 2013; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Poor condition, rear yard filled with trash, lack of maintenance; Codes – 1 Work Order, 2 NoV, 4 QoL weeds

**18. 747 N 8<sup>th</sup> St., Georgia Uche, owner, 747 N 8<sup>th</sup> St Reading, Purchased May 2003** - Delinquent taxes \$1100.45 2022 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$2375.05; Water off 2017; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades poor condition, condemned, front porch in disrepair; Codes – 4 Work Orders, 15 NoV, 11 QoL trash, 11 QoL weeds, \$4849 total unpaid

**20. 315 Moss St., Antonio Hazel R & Ana Morales, owner, 1562 Mineral Spring Road Reading PA, Purchased Feb 2021** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$1225.60; Water off 2006; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Property in disrepair, overgrown weeds/brush; Codes –Failed inspection 1\4\22, 1 QoL trash, 3 QoL weeds, \$875.74 total unpaid

**22. 827 Church St., Ivan Durham, owner, 827 Church St Reading PA, Purchased Sept 1999** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$27216.98; Water off 2012; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Poor condition, boarded windows and rear door, overgrown weeds/brush; Codes – 2 Work Orders, 12 NoVs, 15 QoL Trash, 13 QoL Weeds, 3 QoL motor vehicle nuisance, 2 QoL Indoor furniture outdoors. \$5158.50 total unpaid

**23. 513 S 15<sup>th</sup> St., Nixon Felix & Daysi Reyes, owner, 36 Van Buren St Passaic NJ, Purchased May 2006** - Delinquent taxes N/A; Delinquent water \$6781.63; Water off 2019; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Poor condition, front porch caved in; Codes – 1 Work Order, 1 NoV, 5 QoL weeds, 3 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$3164 total unpaid

**24. 528 A S 9<sup>th</sup> St., Virginia Rivera, owner, 537 S 6<sup>th</sup> St Reading PA, Purchased June 2018** - Delinquent taxes \$1338.67 2022 City, County, School; Delinquent water \$12636.23; Water off 2017; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades Poor condition, no maintenance; Codes – 7 NoV, 4 QoL Trash, 3 QoL weeds, 2 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$365 total unpaid

**26. 209 R Maple St., Pure Construction LLC, owner, 1031 Chestnut St Reading PA, Purchased March 2020** - Delinquent taxes \$153.16 2022 County; Delinquent water N/A- no water service; Electric N/A; Gas N/A; Trades No roof, walls falling in, filled with trash and rubbish; Codes – 9 NoV, Failed inspection 9\26\23, 4 QoL trash, 3 QoL indoor furniture outdoors, \$1985 total unpaid

#### **Public Comment**

None.

**Mr. McMahon moved, seconded by Mr. Eyrich, 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 Wednesday, January 17, 2024 and the work session is scheduled for January 10, 2024. Both will be conducted via hybrid – in-person and Zoom.

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

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