
Blighted Property Review Committee

Thursday, March 19, 2009

Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: L. Olsen, M. Candelario, M. Wolfe, D. Luckey, W. Bealer

Others Attending: C. Younger, M. Mayes, L. Kelleher, D. Wright

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. He announced that a quorum was present.

Public Comment

No one offered public comment

Agenda and Minutes

Mr. Olsen asked the Committee to review the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the February meeting.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the February meeting.

Matrix

Ms. Kelleher explained that the matrix attached to the agenda was built at the request of the BPRC and follows the process defined by Mr. Bealer using the Allentown and Harrisburg BPRC applications. The matrix separates the function of each group - City Council, the Redevelopment Authority, the Planning Commission, the BPRC, etc. - and lays out their actions over a 12 month period. The date each task is completed can be on the sheet for each individual target property.

Mr. Luckey noted the Redevelopment Authority's desire to have funding for rehabilitation, demolition, etc. in place. Mr. Bealer and Ms. Kelleher reported on the Administration's promise to provide funding as it is needed. Mr. Bealer described his meeting with Mr. Mayes about the BPRC mission and needs. Mr.

Olsen noted that the BPRC has developed partners with the County ADD program, the NHS, Habitat for Humanity, and OCR. The Redevelopment Authority will only be used when other partners cannot assist. Mr. Younger suggested formalizing partnership agreements with the previously mentioned parties. He offered to draft the agreements.

Mr. Luckey noted the need for the BPRC to prepare a back-up plan when no rehabilitation partner steps forward. He reminded everyone that, for example, Habitat for Humanity sometimes prefers new construction to rehabilitation and some levels of rehabilitation may be more than NHS can handle. Mr. Mayes agreed. Ms. Wolfe also noted the need for the BPRC to have a plan to handle commercial properties that may be abandoned.

Update on Target Properties

Mr. Mayes and Mr. Wright distributed an update on the 16 of the target properties, dated November 17, 2008. Of those 16 properties, five are either scheduled for demolition or have entered rehabilitation plans.

Mr. Mayes suggested that the BPRC apply for CDBG funds in the upcoming cycle. He suggested that Stimulus money could be used to fund demolition costs, as demolitions can occur within the 90-120 days. Ms. Kelleher reminded everyone that last year Mr. Hottenstein told the BPRC and City Council that rather than making an allocation the 2009 CDBG Budget, an amendment to the CDBG budget could be prepared to provide funding as it is needed. Last year the BPRC was looking for funding to cover the appraisal of the target properties. Mr. Mayes offered to prepare a CDBG application for the BPRC before the April meeting. Mr. Mayes also described his conversation about the BPRC with Mr. Mukerji, Executive Director for the Redevelopment Authority.

Determination Hearings

Mr. Bealer stated that the check-off sheets are being prepared. He also distributed a draft letter that will again notify the property owner that his property is blighted and that the property is proceeding to the next stage of the BPRC process. Mr. Younger stated that the letter needs more specifics about the process, the opportunity for rehabilitation and the property owner's ability to appeal.

Mr. Bealer noted that the sample letter from Allentown cites the Urban Redevelopment Law. Mr. Younger stated that he is unclear if the Reading BPRC legislation was drafted based on the Federal or State Urban Redevelopment Law

or something else. He offered to research this issue further.

After some discussion on who should sign the letter, Ms. Kelleher noted that the BPRC Ordinance requires the chair of the BPRC to sign the determination hearing letter. Mr. Olsen noted that the determination hearing letters need to be mailed out 90 days before the hearing. The hearing is scheduled for July 16, 2009; therefore, the determination hearing letters need to be posted no later than April 16, 2009.

Updates

Inclusion of ADD, OCR, Garden Properties, etc.

Mr. Bealer reported that he is working to incorporate ADD, OCR, etc onto the blighted property map.

Grants

Ms. Kelleher stated that she and Mr. Olsen are waiting to hear from the DCED regarding grant opportunities.

Other Business

Mr. Candelario noted the formation of committees at the February meeting. He suggested that the committee list be included on the monthly Update list. The Committees are set as follows:

Grants - Mr. Olsen and Ms. Kelleher

Codes - Mr. Bealer and Mr. Wright

Education - Mr. Candelario and Mr. Mayes

Research - Ms. Wolfe and Mr. Younger

Mr. Olsen noted Council's positive response to the BPRC presentation. Ms. Kelleher stated that POM is quite anxious to start and would like the community to select the POM area. However, City Council believes more care must go into this decision as many factors such as the existing Historic Districts, the existing community groups, etc. need to be considered when defining the POM areas. Mr. Olsen agreed that different counterparts and communities need to be considered when selecting the POM areas.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

FOLLOW-UP ISSUES:

- Draft partnership agreements for ADD, NHS, OCR, Habitat for Humanity – C. Younger
- Finalize Determination Hearing Letters and have them ready for the Chairs signature by April 10th - M. Mayes, D. Wright, C. Younger
- Research Federal & State Urban Development Law and compare to local enabling ordinance – C. Younger
- List Committees under Monthly updates
- Designate POM area