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**Blighted Property Review Committee**  
**Thursday, October 21, 2010**  
**Meeting Report**

**BPRC Members Present:** L. Olsen, A. Grant, M. Candelario, D. Reed, W. Bealer, M. Wolfe, D. Luckey

**Others Attending:** S. Haver, L. Kelleher, J. Kromer, T. Knoblauch

**Call to Order**

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order and announced that a quorum was present.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment and inquired if anyone present wished to comment. As no one expressed the desire to comment, the public comment period was closed.

**Agenda and Minutes from the August and September Meetings**

Mr. Olsen called the committee's attention to the August and September meeting minutes. He noted that the September minutes are from the Determination Hearing. He asked if there were any additions or corrections.

**Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the August and September meetings as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Ms. Kelleher stated that the Determination orders and the Certification Notices were mailed on September 17<sup>th</sup>. She also reported that the notices for Determination and Certification posting were sent to Codes on September 17<sup>th</sup>. However, to date, only the Certification Notices have been posted.

**Hearing Schedule for 2010 and 2011**

Mr. Olsen reviewed the new and aggressive hearing schedule with the committee. He stated that once per quarter the committee will meet to discuss general business and to review the hearing procedures.

**Certification and Determination Lists**

The committee reviewed the list of properties for the November Certification and Determination Hearings.

## **2009 Certification List**

Mr. Haver reported that 343 and 369 McKnight Street and 127 Walnut Street were forwarded to the Redevelopment Authority for eminent domain proceedings. He also reported that the purchase agreement and demo waiver for 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street is moving forward slowly due to the issues pertaining its location within a Brownfield's area. He stated that a compromise may be required to resolve the matter. He also noted that the property's location in the NSP area may also disrupt the City's ability to demolish the property.

## **Other Business**

Mr. Olsen stated that a memo was sent to the Mayor and Interim Managing Director from him, Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Haver pertaining to the lack of proper support from the City's law office and the Codes Division. He stated that to date a response from the Administration has not been issued.

Carmella Boykins arrived and requested permission to speak. Mr. Olsen stated that the public comment period was closed. Ms. Boykins stated that she could not be at the beginning of the meeting due to work. Mr. Olsen stated that after the committee finishes its business, the public comment period would be reopened.

Mr. Olsen stated that the President of Council is also concerned that the lack of proper support from the law office and Codes Division is hindering the committee's ability to move forward to properly address the City's blighted properties. He stated that the President of Council has offered to send a second memo and speak to the Mayor about these gaps.

Mr. Luckey stated that the Reading Redevelopment Authority (RRA) is wary about taking certified properties unless a reuse is established. He stated that the RRA does not want to become the rightful owner of blighted properties that will sit. Ms. Kelleher inquired if it is not the RRA's function to determine the redevelopment plan for the City.

Mr. Bealer stated that the Planning Commission can only recommend a property's reuse based on the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning area the property is located within.

Mr. Olsen agreed that the Planning Commission should make either a residential or industrial reuse recommendation for properties and the RRA should drive the redevelopment of specific City neighborhoods.

The committee discussed the process to follow the Certification of the properties processed.

Mr. Kromer introduced himself to the committee. He stated that he is working for the City to develop an economic and housing strategy as required by the Act 47 Recovery Plan. He

expressed the belief that these two action plans will drive changing the economic condition of the City.

Mr. Kromer stated that he is currently establishing work groups around the housing and economic areas. These groups will begin meeting in the evening in mid-November. He invited the committee to provide input. He stated that he has been impressed with the aggressive attitude of the Blighted Property Review committee. He offered to support and assist in achieving the committee's aggressive schedule and goals. He also added that the new State legislation will amp up the ability of the committee to address problem properties.

Mr. Grant reported that tenants are moving into 116 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Mr. Haver stated that he would check on the owner's status with building and zoning permits.

Mr. Bealer reported that a dumpster has been placed at 515-517 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Bealer stated that he would check to find out if a dumpster permit was pulled along with building/trades permits.

Mr. Bealer stated that a developer is interested in using the Penn Optical building located at 212 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street for a brewery-pub. He also stated that the plan to open a brewery at the former Garden State Tannery on South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street did not occur.

Ms. Reed noted the recent loss of revenue when the City lost the Sound Stage. She stated that this missed opportunity would have helped greatly.

Mr. Grant reported that 157 North Front Street is still boarded up although building/trades permits were pulled.

Ms. Kelleher reported that the law office has not provided updates on 620 and 644 North Front Street or on the Heckman appeal.

Mr. Haver reported that the Determination list for December has been prepared.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Olsen reopened the public comment period and invited Ms. Boykins to address the committee.

Ms. Boykins, owner of 257 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, stated that her mother owns this property with other family members. She stated that the family would like to rehab the property and rent it to a non-profit such as Head Start. She noted the stress associated with owning a property in poor condition. She stated that she has been unable to acquire any assistance from the City.

Mr. Grant explained the blighted property process and noted that process only applies to properties that are in poor physical condition.

Mr. Luckey stated that financial assistance is often limited due to the poor condition of the property and its inability to be occupied.

Ms. Boykins stated that every avenue explored was unsuccessful. She requested assistance. Mr. Haver asked Ms. Boykins to contact him.

Mr. Olsen noted the need for property owners to seek assistance before a property reaches a severely blighted condition. Ms. Kelleher stated that many of the financial options for rehabilitation are focused on owner-occupied properties. Mr. Olsen added that entering into a rehab agreement will not stop the blighted property process.

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

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary*