
Blighted Property Review Committee

Thursday, July 15, 2010

Meeting Report

BRPC Members Attending: L. Olsen, Chair; D. Reed, M. Wolfe, A. Grant, W. Bealer, M. Candelario

Others attending: S. Haver, L. Kelleher, T. McMahon, T. Butler

Mr. Olsen, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and announced that a quorum was present. Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Luckey was unable to attend due to some medical tests.

Public Comment

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment. As no one stepped forward to speak, the comment period was closed.

Agenda and June Minutes

Mr. Olsen stated that the minutes were distributed electronically and are attached to the agenda. Ms. Wolfe noted the need to change "Mr. Wolfe" to "Ms. Wolfe" on the first page.

Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to approve the agenda and the June minutes as corrected. The motion was approved unanimously.

Update – Compression of Blighted Property Process

Ms. Kelleher stated that a few meetings ago, during a discussion on the delay in obtaining property inspections which has delayed the Determination and Certification Hearings, Ms. Mayfield told the Committee that she would research the law to determine if the timeline used last year could be somewhat compressed. No further information has been provided. Ms. Butler and Ms. Kelleher were asked to follow-up with Ms. Mayfield.

Mr. Olsen stated that the timeline was modeled after that used in Harrisburg and Allentown. Ms. Kelleher noted that the process started with a 90 day notice to abate,

which allowed time to conduct and reschedule interior inspections. Ms. Mayfield stated that as interior inspections are not needed, we could possibly avoid the 90 day notice at the upstart.

Mr. Haver noted the need to start the hearing process but Ms. Kelleher stressed the need for a legal determination on the timeline first as providing an initial 90 notice, followed by a 60 day notice prior to the Determination Hearing would push the first Determination Hearing out approximately 5 months.

Review 2010 Target List

Ms. Kelleher stated that the 2010 list contains 62 properties. A few months ago the BPRC instructed Mr. Natale from Codes to select 10 properties to inspect and move forward for a Determination Hearing. Codes has not yet selected any properties. She stated that she and Mr. Haver met to select the first batch of 10 earlier today.

217 N 2nd St	Ventura Octavio
116 N 3rd St	Wellington Salinas
243 N 4th St	Lobos Four LLC
517 N 4th St	Olga Sovgyra
1237 Buttonwood St	Harry Stouffer
161 Clymer St	J&B Investment
146 Elm St	Samuel Sanchez
153 Elm St	Carl Pearson
305 Locust St	Mireya Pagan
476 Schuylkill Ave	Will Gernert

It is hoped that the properties can be posted so a Determination Hearing can be held in September. Ms. Kelleher stated that prior to the Determination Hearing the second batch of 10 properties will be selected and then inspected. The Determination Hearing for the second batch of 10 will be scheduled for the night of the Certification Hearing for the first batch of 10 properties. It is hoped that this schedule can be followed so the entire batch of 62 properties can be handled in about 14 months. Ms. Kelleher also reminded the Committee that Ms. Mayfield suggested completing affidavits for each

property on the hearing list to avoid the laborious testimony about the conditions of each property.

Mr. Haver updated the Committee on the meetings regarding 525 Lancaster Avenue, owned by Tripoint and 400 North 4th Street, owned by Gary Wegman.

Mr. Grant inquired why the Clymer Apartments are on the list as they are outside the Target area. Ms. Kelleher stated that this property was retained due to the number of complaint calls the office receives about the condition of this property. The mansion was severely damaged in a fire a few years ago and remains un-rehabilitated and vacant; however, the carriage house in the rear is undamaged and occupied. Ms. Mayfield was going to research and advise the Committee about their ability to move the property through the Blighted Property process. No update has been received.

There was next a discussion on the change in ownership at 116 N 3rd Street. Mr. Haver reported that the new owner is making the necessary repairs with the required permits; however, he advised that the property should remain on the Target List for processing as this property is in the Target area.

The Committee requested an update on 530-532 Penn Street. Ms. Kelleher reported that the Committee is waiting for the results of the interior inspection requested at the beginning of the year. Although the exterior conditions are improved, the inside is still uninhabitable. Mayor McMahan noted the need to at a minimum, acquire an inspection of the roof. It is believed that old roof damage caused a number of interior issues such as mold. It is also believed that the stairways to the upper floors of the building have been removed.

Brief – Draft State Blighted Property Legislation

Ms. Kelleher distributed copies of the draft provided by Ms. Mayfield. Mr. Haver provided an overview of the legislation, noting that this bill passed the Senate by a 50-0 vote.

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Olsen, to have a letter drafted to the State Legislators requesting their forward movement and enactment of this bill. The motion was approved unanimously.

Update 2009 Certified Properties

Mr. Haver reported as follows:

- 317 Schuylkill Avenue – under rehabilitation with the required building permits
- 157 North Front Street – the new property owners are installing mechanicals and completing cosmetic repairs and have the required building permits
- 210 N Front Street – rehabilitated
- 228 North 2nd Street – sold on June 10th, permits were pulled for interior repairs
- 127 North 2nd Street – recheck address (Remove)
- 212 South 8th Street – no forward progress and severe environmental problems exist. Mr. Haver was asked to contact Realtor Sean Morretti to discuss issues around this property. Ms. Kelleher noted the huge delinquent water charges and real estate taxes on this property.
- 118 West Elm Street – slated for demolition. The contractor is awaiting receipt of the executed contract.
- 343 Mc Knight Street – Mr. Haver will recheck building permits and progress. Ms. Kelleher was asked to recheck ownership information.
- 360 McKnight Street – no progress, refer to the Redevelopment Authority for eminent domain
- 127 Walnut Street – the exterior of the property has been painted. Mr. Haver noted that the Redevelopment Authority is interested in acquiring this property due to its proximity to the Goggleworks.
- 628 North Front Street - slated for demolition. The contractor is awaiting receipt of the executed contract.
- 328 Pear Street - slated for demolition. The contractor is awaiting receipt of the executed contract.
- 153 Walnut Street – no further information concerning the appeal.

Follow-up List

- 124 North 4th Street – an appraisal has been ordered and an offer will be made to Opportunity House, who is willing to sell the property.
- 620 North Front Street – update unavailable until late August.

Ms. Wolfe noted that 626 North Front Street is on the tax sale list. She noted the neighboring church's interest in acquiring this property for off-street parking. She was asked to follow-up with Mr. Haver.

Other Matters

Mr. Olsen asked Mayor McMahon to provide an overview about the proposed Artists District around the Goggleworks. Mayor McMahon explained the goal is to provide living space for artists around the Goggleworks. He stated that this initiative was somewhat successful in restoring communities in other cities. The area is between North 3rd Street and Schuylkill Avenue – Buttonwood to Walnut Street. He noted that the DCED has stressed the need for the City to focus on an area to revive housing stock. He stated that the City is currently trying to obtain a planning grant to begin this process.

The Committee next discussed the ability of a non-profit organizations to obtain federal grants independently. Mayor McMahon expressed the belief that a partnership with the local municipality is required.

Mr. Grant noted that the current NSP grant does not provide funding for demolition and noted the need for a balance between rehabilitation where possible and demolition where the condition of the property warrants.

Mr. Candelario inquired if the Rehabilitation Agreement is available in Spanish. Mr. Haver reported that a CD intern is working on the translation.

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

Respectfully Submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED

- Inspection (and completion of the check sheet) and posting of the following for the Sept. Determination Hearing

217 N 2nd St	Ventura Octavio
116 N 3rd St	Wellington Salinas
243 N 4th St	Lobos Four LLC
517 N 4th St	Olga Sovgyra
1237 Buttonwood St	Harry Stouffer
161 Clymer St	J&B Investment
146 Elm St	Samuel Sanchez
153 Elm St	Carl Pearson
305 Locust St	Mireya Pagan
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- Legal determination for compressed BPRC timeline
- Legal determination for use of Blighted Property process for 161 Clymer St
- Interior Inspection of 530-532 Penn Street (requested in February)
- Letter in support of proposed State Blighted Property legislation currently in House Committee but approved by the Senate – S. Haver, L. Kelleher
- Remove 217 N 2nd Street from 2009 Certification List
- 343 McKnight – recheck ownership & building permits (transferred to Lissette Chevalier April 2010)
- Eminent Domain – refer 360 McKnight and 127 Walnut Street to Redevelopment Authority
- 626 N Front Street – on tax sale list, neighboring church would like to obtain for off street parking; follow up w/ S. Haver
- Reestablishment of De-conversion Incentive Program (May meeting)

