
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, April 17, 2014
Certification Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Olsen called the Certification Hearing to order at 6:11 pm. He announced that a quorum was present.

Mr. Olsen announced that the purpose of the hearing was to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda met any of the 12 conditions set by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, as amended and the City of Reading Blighted Property Review Committee Ordinance, and could be certified as blighted.

BPRC Attendance: W. Bealer, D. Luckey, H. Urena, L. Olsen

Staff Attendance: K. Potts, S. Katzenmoyer, F. Lachat, Esq

Mr. Olsen stated that the minutes from the March meeting were distributed electronically. He asked if any committee member wished to make corrections or changes.

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

Mr. Lachat stated that 700 N 10th St should be removed from this evening's agenda.

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena to remove 700 N 10th St from the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lachat stated that 701 Walnut St should be removed from this evening's agenda for action at the next hearing.

Mr. Luckey questioned why this property was being removed from the agenda. Mr. Lachat stated that there is no electricity. The owner, Mr. Burgos, stated that he is meeting with the City about the electricity on April 24.

Mr. Luckey moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to remove 701 Walnut St from the agenda for action at the next hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lachat stated that 630 Spruce St has corrected all the blight criteria and is eligible to be removed from the process.

Mr. Luckey moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to remove 630 Spruce St from the blighted process. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Lachat stated that 643 N 9th St has corrected all the blight criteria and is eligible to be removed from the process.

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to remove 643 N 9th St from the blighted process. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFICATION HEARING

Mr. Lachat stated that the properties will be taken out of agenda order. The properties with owners or others willing to testify will be taken before properties not having representatives present and the properties without representation will be considered under a Consent Agenda. He explained the hearing process.

1. 150 Spring St, Donald Thomas owner, 150 Spring St, 19601, purchased June 2006

Mr. Lachat asked Mr. Thomas to step forward. Mr. Lachat administered the oath to Mr. Thomas.

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 and certified mail and posted on the property on March 1 and March 5 respectively
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$254.22; Water on
- Electric on
- Gas inactive
- Delinquent Taxes N/A
- Trades: Missing shingles and detached downspout
- Codes: 5 QoL's and 2 NOV's for trash accumulation, weeds, missing gutters and downspouts, peeling paint, inside furniture outside, unlicensed motor vehicle, unstable fence
- Delinquent Trash and Recycling N/A

Testimony of Property Owner

Mr. Thomas distributed photos of the property to the Committee. He stated that he started addressing the paint but that he had a medical emergency. He stated that he is now healthy enough to begin working on the property. He stated that much of the trash has been removed and the rest will be removed next week. He stated that he intends to improve the property but that he has income limitations as he is not working and his children have special needs.

Mr. Luckey stated that the situation is improving. He noted that several delinquent bills have been paid. He questioned what the QoLs were issued for. Mr. Thomas stated that the QoLs were for peeling paint. He stated that the paint is not peeling but that it appears that way due to the large amount of vines removed from the property.

Mr. Bealer questioned if Mr. Thomas was on a payment plan for the fines. Mr. Thomas stated that he has paid several.

Mr. Luckey suggested that this property be tabled to see if progress continues.

Mr. Lachat stated that Property Maintenance visited the property today and stated that there are issues with the fence. Mr. Thomas stated that this is not a fence; it is a gate.

Mr. Luckey stated that progress should be rewarded. Mr. Bealer agreed. He also suggested tabling this property until the next hearing.

Mr. Luckey warned that if progress does not continue, the property will be certified. Mr. Thomas noted his understanding.

Ms. Potts questioned if Mr. Thomas obtained permits for the fence and gate. Mr. Thomas stated that he had not.

Ms. Potts explained that Mr. Thomas must obtain permits from Building and Trades and that they may request that he remove the current structure and reinstall it.

Public Comment

There was no public comment on this property.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Urena, to table 150 Spring St until the next hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

2. 1101 Douglass St., Albert Comfort, owner, CMR 402 PO Box 894 APO AE VA 09180, purchased Nov 1995

Mr. Lachat stated that the property owner is not present but a neighbor, Mark Eichley was present to testify.

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 and certified mail and posted on the property on March 1 and March 5 respectively
- Water Delinquency \$4498.69; water off
- Delinquent City County and School Taxes 2012-13 \$1282.19
- Electric off
- Gas inactive
- Trades: damage and structural issues on the 2nd floor rear deck and roof overhang, missing 2nd floor rear porch railing, falling hazard
- Codes – 24 QoLs, 2 work orders, 1 No Show inspection, unpaid housing permits

Testimony from Property Owner

None

Public Comment

Mr. Lachat called Mr. Eichley forward and administered the oath.

Mr. Eichley stated that this property is uninhabitable. He stated that there are squatters using the property and that he and other neighbors have secured the property. He stated that there are many problems with the property including graffiti, trash, and the 2nd floor rear porch. He stated that the owner is in Florida and is not concerned with the condition of the property. He stated that the property is disgusting and that there are many notices on the door but that no action has been taken.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to certify 1101 Douglass St as blighted. The motion carried unanimously.

3. 443 S 5th St., Ann Marie Almario, owner, 443 S 5th St, Reading, purchased Feb 2004

Mr. Lachat stated that the property owner's husband was present to testify. Mr. Lachat asked Mr. Rivera to step forward. Mr. Lachat administered the oath to Mr. Rivera.

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 and certified mail and posted on the property on March 1 and March 5 respectively
- Delinquent water charges totaling \$131.23; Water on
- Delinquent City, County and School taxes 2013 totaling \$1,906.34
- Electric on
- Gas on
- Trades: Improper repairs to porch columns, porch remains unstable

Testimony from Property Owner

Mr. Rivera stated that more time is needed. He explained that construction has been delayed due to the weather conditions. He stated that he and his wife are disabled. He stated that a permit for the porch work has been issued. He stated that because of his disability he cannot do the work and that they have a limited income. He stated that progress is being made.

Mr. Luckey questioned if delinquent taxes are being addressed. Mr. Rivera stated that they are making installment payments. He stated that the contractor has told him he will be on site tomorrow.

Mr. Olsen questioned if Mr. Rivera resided at the property. Mr. Rivera stated that he has lived in this property for 10 years.

Mr. Olsen stated that the porch railing is wrought iron. Mr. Rivera stated that it is and that it has rotted off the columns. He stated that some welding needs to be done and new posts constructed. He again stated that there is limited income. He stated that he has begun paying the delinquent taxes first and then began addressing the construction issues. He stated that he is working with Portnoff to address the delinquent water fees. He stated that the weather caused the delays with the construction.

Mr. Luckey noted that it was a long, difficult winter. Mr. Rivera noted the need to replace the entire porch columns.

Mr. Olsen stated that this property is located in the Prince Historic District and questioned if the porch work received approval from HARB. Mr. Rivera stated that the work was approved by HARB and that they have given him permission to splice the columns.

Mr. Olsen noted the charm of the existing columns but stated that they do not look good at this time. Mr. Rivera stated that he will complete the work and repaint the columns. He stated that the contractor is working with the artifacts bank for the columns and railing.

Mr. Urena questioned if Mr. Rivera considered financing the construction to move the project forward. Mr. Rivera stated that his wife worked on financing but that the terms were unfavorable.

Public Comment

None

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Luckey, to table 443 S 5th St until the next hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Bealer stated that if there is no progress by the next hearing, the property will be certified.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Olsen inquired if any one representing the following properties is present and inquired if anyone in the audience would like to provide comment on the following properties. No one stepped forward.

1. 1236 Marion St, Gloria Rodriguez, owner, 1236 Marion St, Reading, purchased July 2002
2. 617 Spruce St., William Copeland & Gail Culpit, owners, 617 Spruce St, Reading, no purchase date listed
3. 612 Spruce St., Pierre Joseph, 846 Seven Gables Cir SE Palm Bay FL 32909, purchased March 2010
4. 117 S 11th St, Jose Barrena & Jamie Jimenez , Owner, 84 Orange Ave Elmwood Park NJ 07407, purchased May 2006
5. 312 S 11th St, David Crespo, 5918 57th St Maspeth NY 11378, purchased June 2006
6. 517 S 11th St, Fredymar Perez Nieves & Aurea E Delgado, owner, 517 S 11th Street Reading PA 19601, purchased March 2011
7. 528 S 11th St., Silvia Perez, owner, 11516 114th Pl Ozone Park South Ozone Park NY 11420, purchased Nov 2006
8. 519 S 11th St, BET Investing LLC, 1259 Northampton St PMB 309 Easton PA 18042, purchased July 2007
9. 1413 Muhlenberg St, Maria Sanchez & E Feliciano, owners, 1413 Muhlenberg St, Reading, purchased June 2004

Mr. Lachat stated that these properties meet the blight criteria. In summary:

- All notices were posted and mailed on March 1 and March 5 respectively
- **1236 Marion St:** Water delinquency \$1666.19 and off, Gas inactive, 4QoL and work order weeds
- **617 Spruce St:** Water delinquent \$3340.75 and off; Delinquent City, County and School Taxes 2012-13 \$1096.84; Electric off, Gas inactive, damaged bricks at front right corner ground level, Codes – 4 QoL, 1 NOV broken glass, cracked masonry, missing downspout
- **612 Spruce St:** Water delinquent \$2937.43 and off, Delinquent City, County and School Taxes 2013 \$1063.50, Electric off, Gas inactive, Trades – damaged 3rd floor roof, wooden overhang and fascia, broken windows, prolonged neglect, Codes – 16 QoLs, 3 work orders, 1 NOV broken front windows, trash accumulation, missing down spouts
- **117 S 11th St:** Water delinquent \$5820.60 and off, Electric and Gas off, 17 QoL, 3 Work orders and rodent infestation,
- **312 S 11th St:** Delinquent City and County Taxes 2013 \$534.52, Electric off, Codes –10 QoLs, 1 NOV unsecured, damaged, eyesore, trash and rodent infestation
- **517 S 11th St:** Water delinquent \$2678.57 and off, Electric and Gas off, Codes – 16 QoL trash, 4 Work Orders broken windows, unsecured
- **528 S 11th St.:** Water delinquent \$2741.77 and off, Electric and Gas off, Codes –17 QoL and 2 work orders

- **519 S 11th St:** Water delinquent \$3989.58 and off, Electric off and Gas inactive, Codes –13 QoL and 5 work orders
- **1413 Muhlenberg St:** Water delinquent \$2430.47 and off, Electric on and Gas off, Codes – 6 QoL rear porch sagging, broken railing, broken windows and missing gutters

Mr. Lachat stated that all of the above properties meet at least one of the blighted property criteria.

Public Comment

None

BPRC Vote

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Luckey, to certify the consent agenda properties as blighted. The motion was approved unanimously.

Other Business

No other business was brought forward.

Mr. Urena moved, seconded by Mr. Luckey, to adjourn the hearing at 6:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk