



# ***BLIGHTED PROPERTY REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010**

**CITY COUNCIL OFFICE**

**6:00 p.m.**

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of the Agenda & January Minutes (attached)**
- IV. Update on Target Properties**
  - A. 2009 Certification List – update on eminent domain process from Redevelopment Authority**
    1. 317 Schuylkill Avenue – progress report
    2. 157 Walnut Street – progress report
    3. 210 North Front Street - progress report
    4. 228 North 2nd Street – progress report
    5. 127 North 2nd Street - progress report
    6. 153 Walnut Street – under appeal to Building & Fire Appeals Bd
  - B. Certification Affirmed by Council – update from Planning Commission (see attached)**
    1. 212 South 8th Street (Penn Optical Bldg) - owned by 212 South Eighth Street Ltd, Isaac Teitelbaum, President, Brooklyn NY
    2. 118 West Elm Street (Steven Roberson)
    3. 343 McKnight Street (Buy We Will, LLC)
    4. 360 McKnight Street (Sheila Perez)
    5. 127 Walnut Street (Sandra I. Greer)

6. **628 North Front Street** (Franklin Heredia)
7. **328 Pear Street** (Stephen Pettiway)
8. **317 Schuylkill Avenue** (Napoleon Scott Stephany)

#### V. Follow Up List

1. **Update from Mr. Franco on the rehabilitation of the following by the December 29<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting:**
  - a. 210 North Front Street
  - b. 157 North Front Street
  - c. 228 North 2nd Street
  - d. 153 Walnut Street
  - e. 317 Schuylkill Avenue
2. **Follow-up w/ Opportunity House on 104 and 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street – D. Wright**
3. **Interior Inspections of 343 McKnight St., 153 Walnut St. and 530 Penn St. – S. Franco and Codes**
4. **Follow-up on 116 North 3rd Street w/ OCR - Mr. Mayes and Mr. Wright**
5. **Disposition of 620 North Front Street – Ms. Mayfield and Mr. Franco**
6. **Add the following properties to the 2010 Target List**
  - a. 200 North Front Street
  - b. 235 North 3rd Street
  - c. 257 North 3rd Street

#### VI. 2010 Target List

### 2010 Target Properties

#### TARGET AREA PROPERTIES

- **243 North 4<sup>th</sup> St.** owned by Lobos Four LLC aka Ben Epstein 134 N 6th St Reading Pa 19601 & 145s E 15t Brooklyn Ny 11230 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **104 North 4th Street** owned by Three Brothers Corp (no corporate info available) 4614 5th Ave # 3fl Brooklyn NY 11220 - *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **124 North 4th Street**, owner Opportunity House *Listed in the GVC Book*

- **207 North 4th Street, Vic Properties** aka Victoria Hernandez 179 Huron St Apt 1R Brooklyn NY 11222 - Also Lists 824 Franklin St, Rdg *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **213 N 4th Street** - owned by Lobos Nine LLC 145 SE 15th Street Brooklyn, NY 11230
- **300 North 4th Street** owned By Yanio Garcia 2228 Raymond Ave Reading Pa 19605 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **302 N 4th Street** Mireya Pagan 760 E 166th St Apt 5H Bronx NY 10456 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **304 N 4th Street** owned By Yanio Garcia 2228 Raymond Ave Reading Pa 19605 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **306 North 4th Street** owned By Yanio Garcia 2228 Raymond Ave Reading Pa 19605 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **200 North 4th (Aldine Mansion)** owned by Diversified Investment Properties aka Gary Wegman 1900 Holly Rd, Reading 19602 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **227 N Front Street** - Wendy Rosado, 1546 Perkiomen Ave Reading PA 19602
- **217 North 2nd Street** owned by Ventura Octavio R Lopez 514 W 211th St Apt 2A New York NY 10034 property no longer for sale through a realtor, no improvement to the condition of the property *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **363 North 2nd Street owned by** Martin Jermaine L 622 Pine St Reading Pa 19602 owner reports that interior work progressing, no change to exterior, interior inspection needed *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **200 North Front Street - Our City Reading, 4500 Perkiomen Ave, Rdg 19606** *Listed in GVC Book*
- **235 N 3rd Street - Migual Martinez, 405 S 7th St 19602** *Listed in GVC Book*
- **257 N 3rd Street - Joyce and McCrea Boykins 628 Spruce St 19602** *Listed in GVC Book*
- **213 N 4th Street 1158 Buttonwood Street** - Lobos Nine LLC % Ben Epstein 1455 E 15th St Brooklyn NY 11230

#### INDIVIDUAL TARGET PROPERTIES

- **530-532 Penn St** owned by Phyllis Knoblauch 619 Walnut St
- **116 N. 3rd St** owned by Carlos Cordona 8707 35th Ave # 18 Jackson Heights NY 11372
- **112 S. 6th St** owned by Brazzle Angela L 2206 Upper Gap Rd Coatesville PA 19320
- **114 N 3rd St** owned by Josue Martinez 828 Schuylkill Ave
- **123 S 6th** owned by Antoine Ketty 1743 Reading Blvd Wyomissing PA 19610

- **125 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street** owned by Esther and Gary Gebhard - 521 N Funk Rd Boyertown PA 19512
- **534 Walnut St** Hafner Daniel F 2730 NE 6th Lane Wilton Manors Fl 33334
- **158 West Green Street** owned by Amin Farouk Ghorah 216 Holiday Ln Blandon PA 19510 - *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **506 N 12<sup>th</sup> - DBC LLC Bruce Becker** 1200 N 11<sup>th</sup> St - *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **1237 Buttonwood St** owned by Harry Stouffer PO Box 70 Cressona PA 17929 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **1158 Buttonwood St** owned by Dwight Amole and Rose Torres 930 Centre Ave
- **645 Locust** owned by Michael Gregory 609 Madison Ave Reading PA 19601 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **647 Locust** owned by Michael Gregory 609 Madison Ave Reading PA 19601 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **305 Locust Street** - owned by Pagan Mireya 760 E 166th St Apt 5H Bronx NY 10456 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **161 Clymer St (Clymer Apartments)** owned by J & B Investments aka Jill and Robert Savory PO Box 553 Douglassville PA 19518
- **476 Schuylkill Ave** (Old Firehouse Bldg) owned by Will Gernert 100 Dewald Rd Reading PA 19606
- **644 North Front Street** owned by Barrera Walter 3020 Curtis Rd Sinking Spring Pa 19608 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **525 Lancaster Ave** owned by 525 Lancaster Partners LP aka Andrew Hicks 150 E Pennsylvania Ave Downingtown Pa 19335 *Listed in the GVC book*
- **922 Penn St** - owned by Richard Camelio, PO Box 8108 Reading Pa 19603
- **924 Penn St** - owned by 531 South 14th Street LLC, aka Angelo Amendolia, 820 Nicolls St Reading PA 19604-06
- **930 Penn St** - owned by 531 South 14th Street LLC, aka Angelo Amendolia, 820 Nicolls St Reading PA 19604-06
- **932 Penn St** - owned by 531 South 14th Street LLC, aka Angelo Amendolia, 820 Nicolls St Reading PA 19604-06
- **644 North Front Street** owned by Walter Barrera 3020 Curtis Rd Sinking Spring Pa 19608 - renovations ceased, property vacant and not maintained - new violation letter will be issued
- **516 Franklin Street** - owned by Francisco Mercado 351 Broad St Apt 816-B Newark NJ 07104
- **522 Franklin Street** - owned by Enterprize TNT Inc aka Theodore Gaul 282 Woodside Drive Boyertown 19512-06 & 4311 Kutztown Rd Temple 19560-0
- **526 Franklin Street** - Milton Brendle 170 N Bingaman St, Rdg 19606

- **531 Franklin Street** – Evelyn Ramirez, 531 Franklin St
- **530 Franklin Street** – Liddy Toribio 530 Franklin St
- **532 Franklin Street** – Xavier Mendoza 813 N 11<sup>th</sup> St 19604
- **538 Franklin Street** – Crespo Realty Inc aka David Crespo **5918**  
57th St Maspeth NY 11378
- **1158 Buttonwood Street** – Dwight Amole & Rose M Torres 930 Centre  
Ave, Rdg 19601

## **VI. Committee Reports**

- 1. Codes**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Research**
- 4. Grants**

## **VII. Other Matters**

## **VIII. Adjourn**

---

## **Blighted Property Review Committee**

**Thursday, January 21, 2009**

### **Meeting Report**

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

**Others Attending:** L. Kelleher, D. Wright, M. Mayfield, K. Pick

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. He announced that a quorum was present. He welcomed Ms. Reed to her first BPRC meeting. Mr. Bealer noted the importance of having Council represented at the meetings.

#### **Public Comment**

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment.

**Carmela Boykins, of Spruce Street**, stated that she is representing the Boykins-McCrea family who owns 257 North 3rd Street, which is on the BPRC 2010 Target List. She stated that the property has been vacant for 12 years. After receiving the BPRC Pre-eminent Strike letter, the family met to discuss the future of the property. She stated that the family recently painted the exterior of the property and re-boarded windows. She stated that the family is seeking the City's assistance to cure the property's issues. She added that the family also owns 304 Elm Street.

Ms. Boykins stated that the family would like to have a business open in the first floor of the property. She also stated that she spoke with Ms. Kelleher last week. She stated that Ms. Kelleher was extremely helpful and explained the mission of the BPRC and how the annual lists are created. Ms. Kelleher reported that she mailed Ms. Boykins the Rehab agreements and a list of organizations that can offer financial assistance.

Mr. Olsen explained the legal process used by the BPRC to address blighted properties. He stated that the list of approximately 1300 blighted properties was prepared by a consultant and the City's Chief Building Inspector. He explained that unfortunately the BPRC does not have a funding resource to assist property owners. Mr. Wright noted that there is limited funding in the CDBG Budget to provide minimal assistance to rehabilitate properties.

Mr. Olsen described the conditions that make properties blighted. Ms. Kelleher added

that vacancy is one of the conditions. Mr. Olsen stated that after a rehab agreement is submitted, an interior inspection is performed to determine the property's structural viability. He noted that many of the City's blighted properties are not structurally sound.

Mr. Bealer added that the CDBG Budget also has funding to provide major systems replacement. The program is run by the NHS.

### **Agenda and Minutes**

Mr. Olsen asked the members present to consider the agenda for this meeting and the minutes from the December Meeting.

**Ms. Wolfe moved, seconded by Mr. Candelario, to approve the agenda and the minutes from the December meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **Update of Target Properties**

Mr. Wright distributed an update report from Chief Building Inspector Steve Franco and highlighted the report as follows:

#### **No Change**

1. 210 North Front St
2. 228 North 2nd St
3. 317 Schuylkill Avenue

#### **Demolition - Bids Due 2-18-10**

1. 118 West Elm St
2. 628 North Front St
3. 328 Pear St

#### **Improved Condition**

1. 343 McKnight Street - Ms. Chevalier and Mr. Abreu, property managers, are cleaning up the property and monitoring its security and are actively trying to purchase the property from Buy We Will
2. 157 North Front Street - Ms. Chevalier and Mr. Abreu have secured building permits and are working toward the completion of the Rehab Plan. Plumbing and Electrical permits have also been secured and application has been made for 4 rental housing units. They intend to have the property occupied by Jan-Feb 2010.
3. 360 McKnight Street - Ms. Perez submitted a letter, dated December 10, noting that the property rehabilitation is almost complete. The property, upon

completion, will provide housing for Ms. Perez's son and his girlfriend. Ms. Kelleher added that three (3) blank rehab agreements have been supplied to Ms. Perez; however, she has never submitted a completed agreement.

4. 153 Walnut Street - Exterior improvements continue. Mr. Heckman's appeal request is being processed. However, Mr. Heckman refuses to allow an interior inspection. Ms. Mayfield provided a synopsis of the violations and complaints issued for this property.
5. 530 Penn Street - exterior improvements are underway. Approval has been obtained from the Historic Architectural Review Board. An interior inspection is being arranged. The property is still in litigation. Ms. Kelleher stated that the Knoblauch's are suing CVS, who used to lease 530 Penn. The Knoblauch's claim that CVS agreed to remediate the asbestos in the property. Mr. Olsen noted the receipt of a letter from Louis Masciotti concerning the improvements to the exterior of the property. Mr. Olsen asked Ms. Kelleher and Ms. Mayfield to draft a response letter.

Mr. Pick noted that the 157 Walnut Street address, may be incorrect. He stated that the proper address may be 155 Walnut. He stated that 155 Walnut Street and 118 West Elm Street are listed on the Repository Sale list for early February.

Mr. Grant noted that 114 North 4th Street is occupied and therefore, must be taken off the Target List. He requested an update on 116 North 4th Street.

Ms. Wolfe reported that interior construction (installation of drywall and plumbing) is occurring at 620 North Front Street. Ms. Kelleher reported that ownership has not changed and that the only building permits listed in Hansen are from 2006 and 2007. Mr. Bealer stated that building permits expire in six (6) months. Ms. Mayfield volunteered to follow-up with Mr. Franco. Ms. Mayfield requested delaying placing this property on the Target List.

Ms. Kelleher was asked to follow up with Mr. Miller on the disposition of properties currently under the Planning Commission's consideration.

### **2010 Target List**

Ms. Kelleher distributed a spreadsheet showing the properties who received Pre-eminent Strike Letters. She stated that approximately one half of the certified letters were returned to the office; however, none of the first class letters were returned. She added that approximately twenty of those receiving letters have called the Council Office.

Mr. Grant suggested adding 213 North 4th Street to the list. Ms. Mayfield requested that the committee add 1158 Buttonwood Street (Bravo) to the list.

**Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to add 213 N 4th Street and 1158 Buttonwood Street to the 2010 Target List.**

### **Eminent Domain**

Mr. Olsen stated that following the BPRC certification of blight and the affirmation by the Planning Commission and City Council, the Redevelopment Authority must undertake the eminent domain process. He noted that Mr. Mayes dedicated approximately \$200,000 for the eminent domain process. He stated that the finalization of the agreement between CD and the Redevelopment Authority has stalled.

Mr. Olsen stated that a draft agreement was prepared after meetings with Mr. Mayes, Mr. Mukerji, Ms. Mayfield and Ms. Kelleher. The delay seems to be caused through a disagreement between either providing lump sum funding to the Redevelopment Authority, as suggested by Mr. Mukerji, or having the Redevelopment Authority submit bills to CD for payment, as suggested by Mr. Mayes. He also described his conversation with Mr. Hottenstein and Ms. Kelleher and his agreement for bills to be submitted to CD as they occur for payment.

Mr. Luckey stated that he has asked Mr. Mooney to contact the CD Office to finalize the agreement. He noted that the members of the Redevelopment Authority do not care if funds are directly transferred for Mr. Mukerji's use or if bills will be submitted for payment to the CD Office. The Redevelopment Authority wants to proceed with the eminent domain process.

Mr. Luckey suggested that the City hold off on demolishing properties until after they are transferred to the Redevelopment Authority. He also questioned the availability of NSP (Neighborhood Stabilization Program) funding to assist with the blighted property process. Ms. Kelleher stated that she recently inquired about the same in a conversation with Mr. Hottenstein, who reported that the majority of the funding will be used by OCR (Our City Reading) and NHS (Neighborhood Housing Services). However, he did promise to provide additional funding for the blighted property process if possible. Mr. Luckey stated that while NSP funds focus on the rehabilitation foreclosed properties, they can also be used to demolish vacant and blighted properties.

Mr. Grant noted the need for proper funding of the BPRC effort so additional properties can be placed on the list. He stressed the need for an aggressive stance.

Mr. Olsen reported that the Mayor asked him to arrange a meeting for the new CD Director, OCR and NHS. Mr. Wright explained the NSP Grant application process. He reminded everyone that Reading and Philadelphia were the only Pennsylvania cities to receive NSP funds and that OCR and NHS were included in the grant due to their capacity to rehabilitate properties. He also stated that HUD will be overseeing the use of these funds.

Mr. Olsen inquired about the capacity of OCR and NHS to rehabilitate properties. Mr. Wright stated that both these organizations have proven their ability to rehabilitate properties. He noted that NSP funds must be used within two (2) years and only 10% of the grant can be used for demolition.

Ms. Reed asked the committee to consider the impact spot demolition can have on a neighborhood. She also agreed with the need to de-densify the city.

Mr. Olsen announced that he needed to be excused as he has a conflicting appointment. He asked Mr. Luckey to continue the meeting.

Mr. Bealer described his participation on the Poverty Commission and his work to educate the Commission on the BPRC process and work.

Ms. Reed noted the need for the BPRC to consider the philosophy of rehabilitation or demolition. Mr. Bealer noted the Planning Commission's discussions on the problems that occur when spot demolition breaks the facade line in a neighborhood.

Ms. Wolfe suggested developing an annual report describing the success and work of the BPRC.

Mr. Grant noted the problems that occur when landlords rehabilitate properties without permits and inspections.

Ms. Reed inquired about the application of funding to provide incentive to deconvert multi-unit properties. Ms. Kelleher stated that she recently had a conversation with the City Clerk in Pottstown about their successful deconversion program, which was widely marketed throughout the community. Ms. Kelleher stated that the City had deconversion funds in place for many years; however, the City didn't market the program therefore the funds were never used.

Ms. Reed and Ms. Mayfield agreed that deconversion funds could be offered when zoning permits for existing multi-unit rental properties is denied. They both suggested

reestablishing the program.

Ms. Reed noted the Poverty Commission's concern about the displacement of low income individuals. Mr. Grant disagreed with that concern, as displacement could break the centralization of the low income population in the City.

Ms. Mayfield noted her objective to record the zoning for each property within the City, so when the property is inspected, the City can easily identify those in violation. She noted the need for the Poverty Commission to consider the living conditions of low income individuals and their need to live in safe housing.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Ms. Reed, to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk*

#### FOLLOW-UP ISSUES

1. Update from Planning Commission re affirmation of certification
  - a. 212 South 8th Street (Penn Optical Bldg) - owned by 212 South Eighth Street Ltd, Isaac Teitelbaum, President, Brooklyn NY 118 West Elm Street (Steven Roberson)
  - b. 343 McKnight Street (Buy We Will, LLC)
  - c. 360 McKnight Street (Sheila Perez)
  - d. 127 Walnut Street (Sandra I. Greer)
  - e. 628 North Front Street (Franklin Heredia)
  - f. 328 Pear Street (Stephen Pettitway)
  - g. 317 Schuylkill Avenue (Napoleon Scott Stephany)
2. Follow-up from Redevelopment Authority re eminent domain
  - a. 317 Schuylkill Avenue
  - b. 157 Walnut Street
  - c. 210 North Front Street
  - d. 228 North 2nd Street
  - e. 127 North 2nd Street
  - f. 153 Walnut Street – under appeal to Building & Fire Appeals Bd
3. Completion of agreement between RRA and CD Office re reimbursement of eminent domain costs
4. Reestablishment of De-conversion Incentive Program
5. Follow-up w/ Opportunity House transfer of 104 and 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street to City or RRA - D. Wright
6. Follow-up w/ OCR re their interest in obtaining 116 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

## Disposition of Certified Properties from Planning Commission

### 212 South 8th Street

Mr. Rothermel moved to recommend the reuse of 212 South 8th Street as 'manufacturing-commercial', or a qualifying accessory thereto, and conforming to the dimensional standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward the recommendation.

Resolution #4-2010

### 157 North Front Street

no action (Wayne reported 'progress made'... and expected the codes officials would eventually drop the property from the 'blighted' list... said no recommendation was necessary.)

### 228 North 2nd Street

Mr. Lauter moved to recommend the reuse of 228 North 2nd Street as 'residential', or a qualifying accessory thereto, and conforming to the dimensional standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward the recommendation.

Resolution #5-2010

### 210 North Front Street

Mr. Bingaman moved to recommend the reuse of 210 North Front Street as 'residential', or a qualifying accessory thereto, and conforming to the dimensional standards of the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward the recommendation.

Resolution #6-2010

### 153 Walnut Street

no action – under appeal