



# ***BLIGHTED PROPERTY REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2010**

**CITY COUNCIL OFFICE**

**6:00 p.m.**

**AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Public Comment**
- III. Approval of the Agenda & March Minutes (attached)**
- VI. Update – request for Codes assistance re inspections**
- V. Update – Purchase of Blighted Properties at Tax Sale**
- V. Update on Agreement w/ RRA**
- VI. Update on Target Properties**
  - A. 2009 Certification List – update on eminent domain process from Redevelopment Authority**
    - 1. 317 Schuylkill Avenue – progress report**
    - 2. 157 North Front 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. 212 South 8th Street (Penn Optical Bldg) - owned by 212 South Eighth Street Ltd, Isaac Teitelbaum, President, Brooklyn NY**

7. **118 West Elm Street** (Steven Roberson) – demolition scheduled
8. **343 McKnight Street** (Buy We Will, LLC)
9. **360 McKnight Street** (Sheila Perez)
10. **127 Walnut Street** (Sandra I. Greer)
11. **628 North Front Street** (Franklin Heredia) – demolition scheduled
12. **328 Pear Street** (Stephen Pettiway) – demolition scheduled
13. **317 Schuylkill Avenue** (Napoleon Scott Stephany)

**B. Under Appeal to the Building and Fire Appeals Board**

1. **153 Walnut Street** – under appeal to Building & Fire Appeals Bd

**VII. Follow Up List**

2. **Follow-up w/ Opportunity House on 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street** – D. Wright
3. **Disposition of 620 North Front Street** – Ms. Mayfield and Mr. Franco
4. **113 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** – OCR Interest in obtaining?

**VIII. 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 4<sup>th</sup> Street** – owned by Lobos Nine LLC 145 SE 15th Street Brooklyn, NY 11230
- **300 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street** owned By Yanio Garcia 2228 Raymond Ave Reading Pa 19605 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **302 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street** Mireya Pagan 760 E 166th St Apt 5H Bronx NY 10456 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **304 N 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> (Aldine Mansion)** owned by Diversified Investment Properties aka Gary Wegman 1900 Holly Rd, Reading 19602 *Listed in the GVC Book*
- **227 N Front Street** – owned by 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – Migual Martinez, 405 S 7<sup>th</sup> St 19602** *Listed in GVC Book*
- **257 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – Joyce and McCrea Boykins 628 Spruce St 19602** *Listed in GVC Book*
- **213 N 4th Street** - Lobos Nine LLC % Ben Epstein 1455 E 15th St Brooklyn NY 11230
- **827 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street** – owned by Bayview Financial Holdings, L.P., David Quint, President, Legal Department , 4425 Ponce de Leon Boulevard Fifth Floor , Coral Gables, Florida 33146
- **116 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St** owned by Carlos Cordona 8707 35<sup>th</sup> Ave # 18 Jackson Heights NY 11372
- **146 Elm Street** owned by Aladdin Bonilla, 146 Elm St, Rdg

## INDIVIDUAL TARGET PROPERTIES

- **530-532 Penn St** owned by Phyllis Knoblauch 619 Walnut St
- **112 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St** owned by Brazzle Angela L 2206 Upper Gap Rd Coatesville PA 19320
- **123 S 6<sup>th</sup>** 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*
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- **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
- **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 *Listed in the GVC Book* - 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 *Listed in GVC Book*
- **522 Franklin Street** – owned by Enterprize TNT Inc aka Theodore Gaul 282 Woodside Drive Boyertown 19512-06 & 4311 Kutztown Rd Temple 19560-0 *Listed in GVC Book*
- **526 Franklin Street** – Milton Brendle 170 N Bingaman St, Rdg 19606 *Listed in GVC Book*
- **531 Franklin Street** – Evelyn Ramirez, 531 Franklin St *Listed in GVC Book*
- **530 Franklin Street** – Liddy Toribio 530 Franklin St *Listed in GVC Book*
- **532 Franklin Street** – Xavier Mendoza 813 N 11<sup>th</sup> St 19604 *Listed in GVC Book*
- **538 Franklin Street** – Crespo Realty Inc aka David Crespo **5918** 57th St Maspeth NY 11378 *Listed in GVC Book*

**IX. Committee Reports**

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

**X. Other Matters**

**XI. Adjourn**

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## **Blighted Property Review Committee**

**Thursday, March 18, 2010**

### **Meeting Report**

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

**Others Attending:** L. Kelleher, M. Mayfield, K. Pick, N. Long, S. Phile, D. Robinson, D. Wright

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

#### **Public Comment**

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment and inquired if anyone present wished to make remarks to the committee. As no one came forward, the comment period was closed.

#### **Agenda and Minutes**

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

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

#### **Agenda**

Mr. Pick introduced Nelson Long, County Treasurer and Stacey Phile, Tax Claim Manager, to the group. He stated that some of the properties certified as blighted in 2009 are on the repository sale list. Ms. Phile stated that currently there are approximately 60 properties on the repository sale list, with a total assessed value of \$700K-\$800K. The 10-20 city properties on the list have an assessed value of approximately \$15K-\$20K and are either severely blighted or demolished. She stated that the regulations would allow the City to obtain these properties very inexpensively. The properties could be purchased by either the City or the Reading Redevelopment Authority (RRA).

Mr. Pick explained that if the properties are purchased from the repository list they are

free and clear of taxes, mortgages, liens and judgments. However, the judgments, liens and mortgages are attached to the title of the property and are revived if the property would be sold. He suggested that quiet title acquisition could provide a clean title. Mr. Long stated that Socrates Georgeadis, Solicitor to the Treasurer's Office will assist the City to obtain these properties.

Ms. Phile stated that the City can remove properties from the sale list by providing correspondence before the day of the sale. She also stated that the BPRC could attend the sales with other City representatives to advise people who purchase blighted properties about the rehabilitation requirements. She and Mr. Nelson noted that many times people purchasing properties at this level have no idea what they are buying. She provided some examples. She stated that the property is sold to the highest bidder. She stated that at the last sale someone purchased a property for \$19.

Mr. Olsen explained the BPRC process, the blighted property criteria and how each Target List is developed. He stated that a consultant identified over 1200 blighted properties that meet the criteria in Reading. He also noted that the process is defined by State Statute. Ms. Mayfield explained the eminent domain process that follows the certification of the blighted property. She stated that obtaining the properties from the repository sale list would be much less expensive than eminent domain.

Ms. Phile also stated that if the City does not purchase properties at the repository sale, they can also purchase the properties via private sale for any amount. Again the property would be free and clear, unless it is then resold before quiet title is obtained.

Ms. Phile explained that in repository sale the bids are sealed and purchase prices can be as low as \$1. After the bid is accepted, the purchase must be approved by the three (3) taxing bodies. She stated that currently repository sales are held in June of each year; however, the Treasurer's Office would be willing to schedule an additional sale. Ms. Phile stated that none of the properties on the 2010 List are up for tax sale. Ms. Kelleher asked if Ms. Phile could send the list to the City occasionally, so it could be checked against the list compiled by the consultant.

Mr. Long stated that he would like to assist the City in addressing blighted properties. Ms. Phile stated that the next sale is scheduled for June. She also described HB 711 and 712, currently under consideration, are focused on abandoned properties.

Mr. Olsen noted the value of the assistance offered by Mr. Long and asked Ms. Mayfield to work with Mr. Long and Ms. Phile. He asked Ms. Phile to send the repository list to Ms. Kelleher. He thanked Ms. Phile and Mr. Long for offering their assistance.

### **Certification and Eminent Domain**

Mr. Robinson described the development of the agreement with the RRA. He stated that when a property is certified as blighted the certification lasts for ten (10) years. He suggested delaying eminent domain on these properties until a reuse is identified. He explained that if eminent domain occurs, the City and/or the RRA will be required to maintain and secure the property. He stated that the average cost to maintain and secure a property is \$25 per week, which would be expensive annually moving forward. He noted the additional options to perform the maintenance internally or through Our City Reading (OCR). Mr. Pick stated that Mr. Robinson's estimate is accurate

Mr. Robinson suggested, instead, that as the certification lasts ten (10) years that the properties are monitored (condition, transfer, tax sale, etc.) so they can be obtained without the expense of eminent domain. He stated that approximately \$400K is allocated annually for demolition. He noted that this is apart from funding allocated for the BPRC. He explained the options. He also explained the need to refrain from land-banking so CDBG dollars can be used. He suggested covering the partial salary of a RRA employee so RRA funding can be freed for the purchase or maintenance of properties obtained from the Tax Claim Bureau.

Mr. Robinson stated that properties certified or on the Target list can be marketed even though they are not owned by the City or the RRA. He noted the need to seek out developers or interested parties to take title.

Mr. Luckey noted the need for good planning around this process. Mr. Grant noted the increased risk of taking blighted properties rather than demolished properties. Ms. Reed described an approach taken by a realtor to purchase blighted properties and to disassemble and sell the remaining valuables prior to demolition.

Ms. Wolfe stated that three (3) of the properties certified in 2009 have just been scheduled for demolition. She questioned the huge delay. Mr. Olsen described his conversation with the Building Inspector concerning the demolition process and scheduling the use of available funds.

Mr. Olsen stated that he shares Ms. Wolfe's concern and questioned the purpose of going through this lengthy and time consuming process when the parties who are required to take the remaining steps fail to do so. Ms. Mayfield stated that she understands the concern expressed. She noted that the steps following certification are complicated and take time. She also explained the process to demolish and turn the

cleared property over to the adjacent property owner.

### **RRA Development Agreement**

Ms. Mayfield stated that the agreement is in draft form. Ms. Kelleher distributed the 2nd draft along with comments from the CDBG Technician. Ms. Mayfield noted that the agreement with the RRA is a side agreement. The points covered by the CDBG Technician will be covered in the CDBG agreement. Mr. Robinson stated that the draft represents a good start but some detail and amendment is still needed. He stated that he will provide an update in April.

### **2010 Target List**

Mr. Olsen inquired if the Building Inspector has provided a report on the properties listed. Ms. Kelleher stated that she has reminded Mr. Franco about the need for follow-up on the 2010 properties many times over past two (2) months without response. She stated that the office was in a state of shock in February and is recovering from the sudden death of Mr. Yourkovitch. However, she expressed concern that it has been close to four (4) months since the pre-eminent strike letters were sent and that the BRPC cannot determine the final 2010 list until Mr. Franco advises about the condition and status of the 47 properties on the proposed list. She added that the process is already behind, as the letters advising of the need to rehab or demolish must occur for approximately 120 days prior to the determination hearing notice.

Ms. Wolfe and Ms. Reed expressed concern about the delay.

Ms. Kelleher reported that she and Mr. Olsen have had conversations about the delay and she called the BPRC's attention to the memo sent at the end of last week. She noted that this year's pre-list contains 47 properties. She stated that it is almost impossible for the Building Inspector to handle this load on his own. Therefore, the BPRC is asking the Managing Director and Police Chief to provide assistance through the Codes office. She stated that Property Maintenance Inspectors could be instructed by Mr. Franco about the criteria. Ms. Kelleher stated that no response was received from the Managing Director or the Police Chief.

Mr. Olsen and Ms. Reed suggested scheduling a meeting with the Police Chief and Managing Director to discuss the issue further. All agreed with the need to have follow up from the Building Inspector on the condition of the 47 pre-target list properties so the final 2010 list can be fine tuned. Mr. Candelario agreed that the delay must be corrected.

Ms. Reed described the Detroit initiative; whereby Detroit is being transformed from a

major urban city to an agricultural community.

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

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

### FOLLOW-UP ISSUES

1. 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
  - g. 212 South 8th Street (Penn Optical Bldg) - owned by 212 South Eighth Street Ltd, Isaac Teitelbaum, President, Brooklyn NY
  - h. 360 McKnight Street (Sheila Perez)
  - i. 127 Walnut Street (Sandra I. Greer)
  - j. 317 Schuylkill Avenue (Napoleon Scott Stephany)
2. Purchase properties from repository sale list
  - a. 628 North Front Street (Franklin Heredia)
  - b. 328 Pear Street (Stephen Pettaway)
  - c. 118 West Elm Street (Steven Roberson)343 McKnight Street (Buy We Will, LLC)
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 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street to City or RRA - D. Wright & A. Mukerji
6. Follow-up w/ OCR re their interest in obtaining 116 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street
7. Memo to Police Chief, Managing Director re Codes assistance with inspections of the target properties – Awaiting Response
8. Follow-up from Building Inspector re the condition and status of the following properties:
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Wednesday, March 10, 2010  
Good Afternoon,

Daniel Robinson and I took a tour of 124 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street today with Modesto Fiume. The structure is in poor shape and deteriorating rapidly. Although there is much potential for this building and it's proximity to the Penn corridor is enticing (this was the main reason why the Opportunity House initially acquired the building) the cost of rehabilitating it may exceed \$1.5 - \$2 million.

Community Development's question to the committee is what was/is the designed end-use for this structure? Was it to be demolished right away (at a cost of at *least* \$65-\$70,000.00, consuming a decent allocation of funding)? Was it to be rehabilitated (not a realistic approach at present time considering the capital that would have to be injected)?

Mr. Fiume currently owns this property – we would (CD, RRA, BPRC?) like to start negotiations in the very near future to acquire this property if we have a defined end use. My thought is that we should give serious consideration to an emergency demolition waiver and work through the City's Chief Building Inspector, Mr. Franco, on this front. Condemning this structure as a public hazard wouldn't be a challenge at all. Any response and feedback to me or Dan Robinson would be appreciated.

Thank you all for your time,  
Dan Wright

Daniel Z. Wright  
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(610) 655-6023

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Wayne Jonas Bealer [<mailto:contempfan@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, October 26, 2009 10:04 PM

**To:** Linda A. Kelleher; Andrew W. Miller

Cc: [lolsen@odgarchitects.com](mailto:lolsen@odgarchitects.com); [lphillips@odgarchitects.com](mailto:lphillips@odgarchitects.com); [cnett@odgarchitects.com](mailto:cnett@odgarchitects.com)

Subject: Re: October 27, 2009 City Planning Commission agenda

Good Morning Linda and Lee,

Sorry this has taken so long to get to you. As you see I'm working on this Monday night at 9:30 p.m. Hectic Days lately. Anyway, here is everything you ever wanted to know (I think) about the BPRC process and the Planning Commission.

According to Pennsylvania Statute and our Establishing Ordinance (Paragraph 1-547 "Reuse of Acquired Property"):

"Acquisition and disposition of blighted property shall not require preparation, adoption or approval of a redevelopment area plan or redevelopment proposal, but at least thirty days prior to acquisition of any property, the Redevelopment Authority (sic) shall transmit identification of the property to the Planning Commission and shall request a recommendation as to the appropriate reuse of the property. The Redevelopment Authority shall not acquire the property where the Planning Commission certifies that disposition for residential or related use would not be in accord with the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Reading."

As the solicitor for the Allentown Redevelopment Authority stated at our conference call, the determination is based upon zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. The statement for reuse is usually pretty general: commercial, industrial or residential reuse. I will add some more details for background for the Commission, although their statement of reuse does not have to have all of the details.

The Planning Commission, however, would probably like to know some of the idea we have for the properties, as well as have a discussion on the Penn Optical Building. Linda and Lee, you will probably be there just to give some background to the process and history on the properties. At the last meeting I had already distributed copies of the property sheets. If Linda could make another set for the members, that could be very helpful — no powerpoint needed.

The Properties:

- 212 South 8th Street: there may be a discussion if this building should be demolished and then the zoning map updated to show this property as R-3 like the surrounding area if there is any thought towards new apartments. Otherwise, should the building be demolished to make way for light manufacturing or other commercial venture like an Auto Body shop (there is one on the corner of Bingaman and 8th that might be looking for more space, for example).
- 118 W Elm Street: This building is scheduled for demolition. I have already submitted a plan for using this lot and the neighboring lots, once they are acquired, for the use of a parking lot for Funeral Home at the corner of W. Elm and Front St. I believe 116 W Elm will make it to the list for demolition in 2010. This would be a change from residential to commercial in this case. There will be a question from Fritz about how the properties are handled and dispersed. If

Linda could give some background about the agreement that is being hammered out between Community Development and the Redevelopment Authority, this could be very helpful.

- 343 McKnight Street: This property is slowly making its way to the demolition list. Since this property has a \$10,000 water bill, it probably won't be rehabbed by the people who are taking care of 157 Front Street. I would recommend demolition and splitting the property between the neighboring owners (its a 15 ft. wide lot). This would be a residential reuse as green space.
- 157 N Front Street: The original intention was to combine this with 155 N Front Street and sell the two lots to Habitat for Humanity. Since the one couple has come forward with the intention to rehab, this idea has been put to rest. Either way this would be a residential reuse and considering the square footage this would become an apartment building again.
- 360 McKnight Street: This building is in pretty good shape. This would be a residential reuse, single-family residence, by rehab.
- 210 N Front Street: This one might be coming off the list. This would be a residential reuse, anyway. The question will be if it will become a single-family residence as Mr. Amado testified, or will it become an apartment building again. It would be a pretty big single-family home for that neighborhood (although I don't believe it is bigger than my house).
- 228 N 2nd Street: Since Celia Garcia is moving back to Puerto Rico, it looks like NHS might take control of this building. Although the background story is a little fishy. Anyway, this is a residential reuse, single-family residence, by rehab.
- 127 Walnut Street: I'm not sure of the condition of this building. Steve Franco hasn't mentioned demolition, so I assume this will be a rehab into an apartment building.
- 153 Walnut Street: Mr. Heckman's building. Although he is rehabbing into an apartment building, it would be nice to see this returned to a single-family home and combined with 155 Walnut Street, which was demolished this past year. Either way, this is a residential reuse by rehab.
- 628 N Front Street: This building will be demolished. The plan is to combine it with 626 N Front Street and the city will turn it over to the Lutheran Church (Ms. Wolfe's) on the corner of Greenwich and N Front Streets. This would be a change of residential to recreational space: I'm not sure what category this would be according to Zoning.
- 328 Pear Street: This will be demolished. The recommendation would be to split the property between the neighbors. This would be a residential reuse as green space.

I will drop off some photos and materials from the hearings with Andrew tomorrow.

Thanks,  
Wayne