
Blighted Property Review Committee
Thursday, November 18, 2010
Certification Hearing
Meeting Report

Mr. Olsen called the Certification Hearing to order at 6:10 p.m.

Mr. Olsen announced that the purpose of the hearing is to consider if the conditions of the properties on the agenda met the 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: D. Luckey, D. Reed, L. Olsen, A. Grant, W. Bealer, M. Candelario.

Staff Attendance: L. Kelleher, S. Haver, T. Butler

Mr. Olsen asked Ms. Butler, attorney from the City's Law Department, to conduct the hearing. Ms. Butler explained the hearing procedures and summarized the blighted conditions as set forth in the City's Blighted Property ordinance.

1. **217 North 2nd Street, owned by Octavio R. Lopez-Ventura, of 514 West 211th Street, Apt 2-A, New York, NY 10034, purchased December 2007.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step to the podium. No one responded. She announced that the property owner was not present.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Ms. Butler again asked the property owner to step forward. No one stepped forward.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler asked if anyone in the audience would like to provide comment on this property. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Ms. Reed, to approve the certification of 217 North 2nd Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 2. 116 North 3rd Street, owned by Wellington Salinas, 836 Redwood Avenue, Reading, PA 19606, purchased in March 2010.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward. Mr. Salinas stepped to the podium and was assisted by someone in the audience with translation services. Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Salinas and provided him with a property packet.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been significant improvement to the property and that a compliance letter was issued by the Property Maintenance Division. She recommended removing the property from the list.

Mr. Salinas stated, with assistance from a translator, that he has worked to bring the property into compliance with the City's regulations.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Luckey moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to remove 116 North 3rd Street from the blighted process. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 3. 243 North 4th Street, owned by Lobos Four, LLC, aka Ben Epstein, 145 SE 15th Street, Brooklyn NY 11230, purchased November 2005.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. Eric Byrne stepped forward and stated that he is the property manager for this property.

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Byrne and provided him with a copy of the property packet.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that both property packets include

affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Mr. Byrne explained the leg work that he has done to explore the future use of the property. He stated that demolition would be best as there are too many environmental issues with the property for residential reuse. He stated that he hopes to identify a commercial use that would work well in this Ricktown neighborhood.

Ms. Reed noted that the property was purchased in 2005 and inquired about the length of time to bring the property into compliance. Mr. Byrne stated that he is unsure at this time but promised to cooperate with the City.

Mr. Haver expressed the belief that Mr. Byrne will act responsibly with this property.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one came forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to certify 243 North 4th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 4. 517 North 4th Street, owned by Olga Sovgrya, of 200 84th Street, Apt 604 Brooklyn NY 11214, purchased April 2008.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. No one stepped forward and Ms. Butler announced that the property owner was not present.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Ms. Butler again asked the property owner or his agent to step forward. No one responded.

Public Comment

Mr. Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to certify 517 North 4th Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 5. 1237 Buttonwood Street, owned by Harry Stouffer, of PO Box 70, Cressona PA 17929, purchased in November 2007.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward.

Ms. Kelleher provided Mr. Stouffer with a copy of the property packet and asked him to take the oath. Mr. Stouffer refused to take the oath and stated that he filed for an appeal. Mr. Stouffer then left the hearing.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Bealer moved, seconded by Mr. Luckey, to certify 1237 Buttonwood Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 6. 161 Clymer Street, owned by J & B Investments aka Jill and Robert Savory, PO Box 553, Douglassville, PA 19518, purchased April 2007.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owners to step forward.

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Robert Savory and provided him with a property packet.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from

the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Mr. Savory stated that the property could not be demolished or rehabilitated due to the divorce and the lack of settlement on the marital assets. He stated that the Divorce Hearing Master recently ordered that the main house be demolished. The main house was involved in a major fire several years ago and was un-remediated. The demolition will be funded through the property owner's escrow account. The carriage house, which was not affected by the fire, will remain.

Mr. Savory stated that utility shut-offs are underway and a demolition permit is in progress. He stated that Miller Demolition and Excavation will be demolishing the main house within the next three (3) weeks.

Ms. Reed suggested continuing with the certification proceedings and then removing the certification after the demolition has been completed. Ms. Butler agreed.

Mr. Savory inquired about the process after the certification hearing. Ms. Kelleher explained that certified properties are first referred to the Planning Commission who reviews and recommends a reuse. The properties then go before City Council, who transfers them to the Redevelopment Authority for the eminent domain process. She stated that if the demolition is completed by December 16, the certification can be lifted at the December Hearing.

Ms. Butler asked Mr. Savory to provide Ms. Kelleher written notice when the property is demolished.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to certify 161 Clymer Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 7. 146 Elm Street, owned by Samuel Sanchez, 520 Schuylkill Avenue, purchased May 2010.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner to step forward.

Ms. Kelleher issued the oath to Mr. Sanchez and provided him with a copy of the property packet.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Mr. Sanchez explained the need to have more time to correct the problems at the property. He stated that money has been tight and that the lack of sufficient funding has slowed his progress. He stated that he recently installed insulation in the interior of the property and is preparing to install sheetrock. He stated that he has been keeping the exterior of the property maintained. He promised to continue working on the property, as he intends to use it as an owner occupied property.

Mr. Haver asked Mr. Sanchez to call him to discuss funding options. He added that this property is scheduled for tax sale next month. Mr. Olsen suggested that Mr. Haver assist Mr. Sanchez with a rehab agreement.

Mr. Sanchez stated that he has been working with the Tax Claim Bureau to pay the delinquent taxes down to prevent tax sale. He stated that another \$400 payment will remove the property from the December tax sale list.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one came forward to speak.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to certify 146 Elm Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 8. 153 Elm Street, owner by Carl Pearson, of 4432 Somerton Rd., Trevoise PA 19503, purchased April 2007.**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner or his agent to step forward. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Ms. Butler again asked the property owner or his agent to step forward. No one responded.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Ms. Reed moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to certify 153 Elm Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 9. 305 Locust Street, owned by Mireya Pagan, of 70 E 166th Street, Apt 5F, Bronx NY 10456**

Ms. Butler asked the property owner or his agent to step forward. No one stepped forward.

Ms. Butler entered the property packet into the record along with the property packet from the September 16th Determination Hearing. She explained that the property packet includes affidavits from City staff providing information on the current blighted conditions of the property.

Ms. Butler stated that Ms. Kelleher reviewed the records from the September Hearing and compared them to the materials collected for this hearing. Ms. Kelleher stated there has been no improvement to the property.

Ms. Butler again asked the property owner or his representative to step forward. No one responded.

Public Comment

Ms. Butler opened the floor for public comment. No one stepped forward.

BPRC Vote

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer to certify 305 Locust Street as a blighted property. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Olsen announced that the Certification Hearing was concluded.

Mr. Olsen called for a 10 minute recess before the start of the Determination Hearing

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary