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## **Blighted Property Review Committee**

**Thursday, April 15, 2010**

### **Meeting Report**

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

**Others Attending:** L. Kelleher, M. Mayfield, K. Pick, S. Haver

Mr. Luckey stated that Mr. Olsen, due to work commitment, was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Luckey called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

#### **Public Comment**

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

Mr. Grant moved, seconded by Ms. Reed, to approve the agenda and the minutes from the March meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **Codes Assistance in Target Property Inspection**

Ms. Kelleher stated that last Friday, she, Mr. Olsen, Mr. Hottenstein, Chief Heim, Mr. Wright and Mr. Robinson met to discuss the need for Codes to assist Building Inspector Steve Franco with property inspections. Ms. Kelleher stated the Administration was receptive to the request as they recognized the difficulty Mr. Franco would have individually inspecting and following up on the 48 properties selected by the BPRC. She stated that the BPRC process is already two (2) months behind last year's schedule. Last year the BPRC only handled approximately 14 properties. The more aggressive approach for 2010, along with other issues in the Trades Office, has created a backlog. Ms. Kelleher stated that Chief Heim agreed that as Codes inspectors are assigned to districts across the City that they would not have difficulty inspecting the BPRC properties as the BPRC inspections are not as intense as regular property maintenance inspections. Mr. Franco or Mr. Dunkle can

be called in to review potential structural issues.

Mr. Haver reported that demolition contracts have been executed for three (3) properties that went through the BPRC 2009 cycle. Mr. Luckey noted the need for the RRA to explore eminent domain proceedings using the money allocated in the CDBG Budget.

### **Redevelopment Authority Agreement**

Ms. Mayfield and Mr. Haver reported that revisions to the draft agreement between the RRA and the CD Department were recently submitted to Mr. Mooney, Solicitor to the RRA. Mr. Haver stated that the original document was too heavily slanted to favor the RRA.

Mr. Haver reported that the York Redevelopment Authority actively markets properties on the blighted list, before eminent domain. He stated that York lists all blighted properties on the website.

There was discussion on tagging blighted properties to up the ante on blighted property owners. Also discussed was creating a wall of shame, similar to that used in Allentown.

Mr. Grant noted the need to strike a balance between rehabilitation and demolition. The need to de-densify Reading was discussed. The committee also discussed the Penn Street properties listed on the 2010 Target List and the need to rehabilitate them up to HARB standards. Mr. Haver and Ms. Kelleher noted the availability of the facade program to assist with property improvement and the availability of tax credits.

### **Tax Sale**

Mr. Pick stated that the Repository Sale occurs annually in February. He explained that properties on the Repository Sale list can also be purchased via private sale; however, the liens on these properties are not removed when sold via private sale. Ms. Kelleher added that liens can be removed through quiet sale proceedings. Mr. Pick stated that he believes the County is willing to hold a second Repository Sale in either August or September. He stated that he will report further at the May meeting.

### **2009 Certified Blighted Properties**

Mr. Haver reported that 628 North Front St., 118 West Elm Street, and 328 Pear Street are under contract for demolition. The demolition contract was recently executed.

Ms. Kelleher reported that the owner of 157 North Front Street and 343 McKnight Street stopped in to notify the Committee that the properties were rehabilitated. The property owner was directed to speak with the Building Inspector.

The reuse of 124 North 4th Street was discussed. Green space is suggested after demolition.

### **2010 Target List**

Mr. Bealer noted the need to demolish the half burned building on Tulpehocken Street. Ms. Mayfield promised to speak with the Solicitor and the Building Inspector.

Mr. Candelario reported that 300, 304 and 306 North Front Street are currently being rehabilitated. He stated that the owner is seeking financing to assist.

Mr. Luckey recalled that the RRA is interested in acquiring the property in the 200 block of North 4th Street. There was discussion on the reuse of the parcel if the property is demolished.

Ms. Mayfield reported that she was recently in court with the owner of 227 North Front Street for code violations.

The reuse of 217 North 2nd Street was discussed. Ms. Mayfield said she would speak with the Reading School District's Solicitor to find out if the District would like to acquire the property after demolition.

Ms. Mayfield reported that the Risk and Safety Division is concerned about sending a City employee into 530-532 Penn Street due to the asbestos issues. After some discussion on the need to determine the stability and condition of this property, Mr. Luckey offered to send his contractor in to perform the inspection. The cost can be covered with the funds allocated to the BPRC.

Ms. Mayfield suggested adding 334 Chestnut Street to the 2010 Target list. She and Mr. Bealer described the deteriorated condition of the building. Ms. Kelleher was asked to mail a pre-emptive strike letter to the property owner.

### **New Business**

Ms. Mayfield called the committee's attention to Senate Bill 900 and the draft Blighted Property Registration legislation recently under consideration by the State legislators. The committee suggested drafting a letter encouraging enactment. Ms.

Mayfield suggested reviewing and discussing the legislation first.

Mr. Grant described his conversation with Mr. Brantley and Mr. Urfer from the Conservancy regarding a Black Gate program. With this program a black facade is installed to hide blighted properties. Ms. Mayfield expressed concern with ownership issues. The pros and cons were discussed.

Mr. Grant also noted the need for the City to enforce the ordinance regarding boarded up properties. Ms. Kelleher and Ms. Mayfield stated that this ordinance is located in the Health and Safety chapter of the codified ordinance book.

The group next discussed the need for Vacant Property Registration. Ms. Kelleher stated that the annual registration fee would support the BPRC activities.

Mr. Candelario questioned using DID ambassadors as contractors to assist in cleaning up the Target area. Ms. Mayfield and Ms. Kelleher cautioned that this would require the City to pay for the service as CDBG funds cannot be used for maintenance activities.

Ms. Mayfield explained the lien process.

As no further business was brought forward, Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Grant, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:50 p.m.

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

#### *REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP*

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 Pettiway)
  - c. 118 West Elm Street (Steven Roberson)
3. Completion of agreement between RRA and CD Office re reimbursement of eminent domain costs – M. Mayfield & S. Haver
  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 – D. Wright & S. Haver
  7. Work w/ County Tax Claim Bureau to purchase properties via private sale – M. Mayfield & S. Haver
  8. Implementation of Codes assistance with inspections of the target properties – Awaiting Response
  9. Review and discussion re State blighted property legislation – M. Mayfield
  10. Follow-up from Building Inspector re the condition and status of the following properties:

Address	Owner
243 N 4th St	Lobos Four LLC aka Ben Epstein
104 N 4th St	Three Brothers Corp
124 N 4th St	Opportunity House
207 N 4th St	Vic Properties Victoria Hernandez
213 N 4th	Lobos Nine LLC aka Ben Epstein
300 N 4th St	Yanio Garcia
306 N 4th St	Yanio Garcia
200 N 4th St	Diversified Investment Properties Gary Wegman
227 N Front St	Wendy Rosado
217 N 2nd St	Ventura Octavio R Lopez
363 N 2nd St	Martin Jermaine
200 N Front St	OCR
257 N 3rd St	Joyce & McCrea Boykins

235 N 3rd St	Migual Martinez
213 N 4th St	Lobos Nine LLC Ben Epstein
827 N 5th St	Bayview Financial Holdings LP David Quint
116 N 3rd St	Carlos Cordona
146 Elm St	Aladdin Bonilla
530-532 Penn St	Phyllis Knoblauch
116 S 6th St	Angela Brazzle
123 S 6th St	Antione Kelly
125 S 6th St	Ester & Gary Gebhard
534 Walnut St	David Hafner
158 W Green St	Amin Farouk Ghorah
506 N 12th St	DBC LLC Bruce Becker
1237 Buttonwood St	Harry Stouffer
1158 Buttonwood St	Dwight Amole Rose Torres
645 Locust St	Michael Gregory
647 Locust St	Michael Gregory
305 Locust St	Pagan Mireya
161 Clymer St	J&B Investment Robert & Jill Savory
476 Schuylkill Ave	Will Gernert
525 Lancaster Ave	525 Lancaster Ave Partners aka Andrew Hicks
922 Penn St	Richard Camelio
924 Penn St	531 South 14th St LLC

930 Penn St	Angelo Amendolia 531 South 14th St LLC
932 Penn St	Angelo Amendolia 531 South 14th St LLC
644 N Front St	Angelo Amendolia Walter Barerra
516 Franklin St	Francisco Mercado
522 Franklin St	Enterprize TNT Inc Theodore Graul
526 Franklin St	Milton Brendle
531 Franklin St	Evelyn Ramirez
530 Franklin St	Liddy Toribio
532 Franklin St	Xavier Mendoza
538 Franklin St	Crespo Reality Inc David Crespo
334 Chestnut St	Allison Little